

**A STUDY OF FIRST-YEAR THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS:
A PASTORAL CARE READING OF DIVERSITY AT A THEOLOGICAL
SCHOOL**

**A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the
Claremont School of Theology**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy**

**by
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This dissertation, written by
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ABSTRACT

A Study of First-Year Theological Students:

A Pastoral Care Reading of Diversity at a Theological School

by

Christine Elizabeth Reimers

This dissertation is a study of a diverse group of first-year theological students, the entering classes of 1996/1997 at the Claremont School of Theology, a mainline Protestant theological school. A body of literature has been written recently about the “crisis” facing liberal Protestant theological education. No study has concentrated on the concrete experience of students with a specific focus on issues of diversity and its impact on any such crisis. Also, the insights of pastoral care and pastoral theology have *not* been applied to this debate. This study aims to help fill that gap.

My thesis is that a specific study of a relatively small sample of theological students can, viewed through pastoral care and counseling eyes, provide new insights into the critical issues facing theological education in the context of diversity. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand diversity in the context of theological education so as to support an educational environment that is appropriate to a pluralistic student body.

The initial research method employed for this study is survey research. Assessments of students’ background and sense of satisfaction with their first year at Claremont were solicited through a survey of all first-year students at the conclusion of spring semester 1997. The surveys provide both descriptive information and data for advanced statistical analysis, utilizing the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) to identify which factors, if any, correlate particular student traits with specific response to the subjective questions.

Resources from theologians writing on theological education--including the Mud Flower Collective, David Kelsey, Rebecca Chopp, and John Leith--are utilized to understand the context of debate regarding theological education. Pastoral care, pastoral counseling and pastoral theological theorists and practitioners, including Larry Kent Graham, Aart van Beek, and collections edited by Christie Cozad Neuger and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner are utilized for their insights into contextual, multicultural, and feminist/womanist perspectives. The final results of the study and the pastoral theological, care and counseling analysis are an affirmation of the complexity of human beings and human community, and encourage a more nuanced understanding of diversity in theological education. Respondents were generally positive and appreciative of the inclusivity and diversity in the classroom and theological education community. This is good news for theological education.

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This work is dedicated to:

my grandmothers,

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Intellectually gifted women ahead of their time.

To my aunts,

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Who have always had time for me, for the church, and for

concrete outreach to the needs of the world.

PREFACE

“Study something you know and care about.” This is my interpretation of the watchword of selecting a research topic. My interest in the “theological education debate” began more by chance, or providence if you will, than by any strategic choice on my part. I came to work in the Admissions Office at the Claremont School of Theology in the fall semester 1990 as a temporary replacement for the office manager who was on medical leave. I came as an alumna looking for temporary work as I considered academic and vocational options and applied to the Ph.D. program. This is the first context in which my research stands. My research is significant, in part, because it is specific about context; it has concrete subjects, and is concerned with particularity.

I worked in Admission at Claremont for six years, throughout my doctoral studies, culminating in my appointment as the director of admission. During that time I witnessed hundreds of first-year students adjusting to the demands of graduate theological education. Many of these students had been carefully recruited and supported to matriculation by Admission Office staff and given significant scholarship offers. Over the years, a significant number of those students returned to the Admission Office at some time in their first year. They dropped by to share some of their experiences and touch base with those of us who “knew them before.” I came to recognize some of their comments as predictable: “I thought people at a seminary would be nicer!” “My classes are so academic and theoretical I don’t see how this will ever apply to the local church!” “There’s so much reading; I had no idea!” On the positive side some students came by to celebrate: “I just turned in my last paper. It’s been a great year! Thanks for helping me

get here.” Or, “I didn’t know this would be so exciting! Every time I pick up a book I think, ‘Wow, someone else who thinks about things I think about.’ I love it!” Both the thrills and the disappointments of first-year students at Claremont came to have a somewhat familiar pattern, from year to year.

As I completed my doctoral course work and became more the decision-maker with regard to the concerns of admission and recruitment, I heard about the “crisis” in theological education and the debate “about the basic nature and purpose of theological education.” I found myself concerned about the current “crisis” and what the future might hold. My concerns have at least two motivations: my personal, practical interest in a ministry in theological education; and, the belief that theological education is, or can be, a vital force in both the churches and society at large. In the context of my admission experience, I began to wonder how the experiences of first-year students might shed a different light on the “crisis” described by theological educators and, perhaps, the “saving work” that is already being done there.^{*} From a pastoral care and counseling framework, this study may be understood as primarily diagnostic. I want to expand our understanding of the true nature of the dis-ease as well as evaluate the health and functional aspects of the system. Moreover, I hope to highlight sources of support that may contribute to, first, more adequate knowledge and, then, resolution or movement toward greater wholeness for persons and the systems involved.

^{*} Rebecca S. Chopp, Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995) 5.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Where are we? Where do we go from here? How do we assess the situation and prioritize the needed changes? These are the broad questions facing the “mainline,” now being described as “old-line,” Protestant theological schools in the United States in the last decade of the twentieth century. Many theological schools are feeling the pinch of critique from both conservative and liberal factions within the various theological traditions they serve. Admissions officials are under pressure to continue to attract at least as many quality students as in previous generations. In fact, many theological schools must increase their enrollments to help provide necessary income and justify their on-going existence to their primary denominational constituencies. Faculties of theological schools are under pressure to respond to an increasingly diverse student body and continue to contribute scholarly research for increasingly diverse disciplines. Presidents, deans, and trustees struggle to address the financial demands of theological education and the interpretation of a particular theological school’s mission in a world of competing interests and often-limited resources. Finally, the students at theological schools face a bewildering array of complex classes and long reading lists; they juggle home, work, church, and studies. If that was not enough, entering students find their new colleagues hail from such a demographically diverse cross-section of the church that none can assume much shared experience. This situation has led to the production of an

unprecedented amount of published critical analysis from faculty at theological schools over the last ten years.¹

Problem

In the past ten years, the “face”² of theological education has changed dramatically. Many aspects of this trend began in this generation after mainline Protestant churches began ordaining women, as a regular policy and in significant numbers, to serve in local church ministry.³ In the 1960s and 1970s, ethnic and cultural diversity began to change previously homogeneous churches, denominations, and theological schools. These changes are aspects of the larger U.S. cultural shifts evidenced by the Civil Rights and Women’s Rights movements of the 1960s, the Black Power movement, and other significant ethnic racial movements, as well as the general aging of the population of the United States. Other changes in the last twenty years, technologically and sociologically, have begun to transform the nature of work and patterns of career change. Options for men as well as for women have changed dramatically. Within the last couple of generations in the United States, we have

¹ David Kelsey. Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), chap. I.

²James M. Shopshire. “New Faces in Theological Education.” Christian Century, 6-13 Feb., 1991, 140.

³ Jackson Carroll, Barbara Hargrove, and Adair Lummis discuss the complex relationship between women's ordination and the development of Protestant denominations in the United States [Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983)]. Earliest recorded ordinations include the following: 1853 in the Congregational Church, 1956 in United Presbyterian, 1956 in United Methodist, 1970 in the Lutheran Churches, and 1977 in the Episcopal Church (Women of the Cloth p. 102). Women of the Cloth also compares the percentages of women in ministry with women in law and medicine. These statistics indicate that in 1930 women were 2.2% of clergy, 2.1% of lawyers, and 4.6% of physicians. In 1980, by comparison, women are 4.2% of clergy, 12.8% of lawyers, and 10.8% of physicians (p. 4). A current newspaper article quoted a Hartford Seminary study as saying “the percentage of women clergy ranges from 1 to 30 percent. The average is 10 percent.” (Cathleen

witnessed an enormous expansion of career opportunities beyond the long-standing tradition of following in one's parents' footsteps. These dramatic culture-wide shifts have brought changes to all graduate schools. Persons are returning to graduate education, particularly professional schools, to retool for advancement in their field or transition to new careers.

Ministry, in particular, has attracted large numbers of second-career and third-career students in the last fifteen years. Ellis Larsen determined, through a large national study of seminarians completed in 1995, that the average age of seminarians increased from 25.4 years in 1962 to 34.2 years in the early 1990s.⁴ To interpret this change accurately, Larsen helpfully points out that the median age for the U.S. population in 1990 was 33.0 years, 27.9 years in 1970 and is expected to be 36.4 in the year 2000. In other words, as we look at the changing demographics of theological school students, it is important to place them in the broader context of societal changes. We should, therefore, understand the aging of the 'average' theological student in the context of the aging of the population of the United States.

James Shopshire summarizes the dramatic changes in the demographics of theological education in the following way:

Falsani, "More Women are Joining the Ministry, though Job Bias Persists," Daily Southtown (Chicago), 28 Feb. 1999, 1. 8.)

⁴ Ellis L. Larsen, "A Profile of Contemporary Seminarians Revisited," Theological Education, 31. suppl. (1995): 87.

In the past two decades a number of demographic shifts have taken place among seminarians, not the least of which has been the surge in older, second-career, students particularly in the decade recently ended. . . . Seminarians of the 70s were overwhelmingly male. . . . Between 1972 and 1980 the number of women in the seminaries tripled and the percentage in the total enrollment doubled from 10.2 percent to 21.8 percent. Seminarians of the 70s were predominately white. More recently, racial-ethnics have continued to increase as a percentage of the total ATS [Association of Theological Schools] enrollments . . . increasing to 13.1 percent in 1989. Many of the racial-ethnic students are women over the age of 30.⁵

In summary, a fundamental problem for many graduate theological schools is that they developed in response to a relatively homogeneous student population. Until the mid-1970s, mainline Protestant ministerial students were primarily Caucasian, young-adult, first-career, and male. Today, mainline theological education serves a diverse population that spans a range of ages, is nearly fifty-percent women, and includes a significant number of persons of color from many different ethnic and racial backgrounds. The following quote illustrates the problem:

[W]e *do* imagine that this may be among the first public statements in which women of different racial/ethnic and religious backgrounds have given corporate voice to the contention that theological education is, in some fundamental ways, a bad experience for women and men of all colors and cultures who seek primarily to know and love a God of justice. . . . We hope to be laying groundwork for dialogue with others in theological education.⁶

Over ten years ago, a group of women theologians, who took the name the Mud Flower Collective, was commissioned by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) to research feminism and theological education. This culturally diverse group of women theological educators struggled collaboratively to express “analytical feminist reflection on what is really involved in theological education.”⁷ They argue persuasively that “race,

⁵ Shopshire, 140.

⁶ Katie G. Cannon et al., (The Mud Flower Collective), God’s Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985), 209-10. Emphasis added.

⁷ Ibid., 202.

class, and gender are critical, even determinative, forces in the ordering of human life and religion.”⁸ As I have reflected on the crisis in theological education and my response to it, I have recognized that I see my task as participating in the dialogue launched by the Mud Flower Collective, the investigation of theological education amidst diversity. To offer a creative and helpful contribution to the questions about the nature and purpose of theological education, I found I wanted to know more about the experience of the students who have inspired me to take on this research in the first place: first-year students. Another aspect of the problem addressed by this study is the lack of pastoral theological, care, and counseling perspectives in the evaluation of the challenges facing theological education in the context of diversity as well as in proposals to address identified concerns. Therefore, this study addresses issues of diversity by studying a diverse group of students at a specific time in one educational context, first-year students at the Claremont School of Theology in May 1997; and this study brings the insights of pastoral disciplines into the dialogue.

A central question for this study is the following: what can we learn about theological education from survey questions about the subjective experience of theological students at a particular time and place in a diverse first-year population? Are their expectations met, or not, or even exceeded, in some areas? Although a significant number of books have been written recently about the nature and purpose of theological education, no study has concentrated on the concrete experience of a particular of group students with a specific concern for issues of diversity. This study aims to help fill that gap.

⁸ Ibid., 34.

Why Study the Claremont School of Theology?

The Claremont School of Theology mission statement from its 1996-1998 catalog states the following:

We are enriched by the diversity of traditions among our students, faculty, staff, and trustees. Our quest, our preparation of leadership for tomorrow, and our service are strengthened in a context that is interdenominational, intercultural and international. To this end the Claremont School of Theology will . . . nurture a community life that is spiritually rich and that offers the worship, care, vision, and challenge that are important to spiritual growth . . . [and] address difficult theological, ethical, and social issues faced by the churches and the world.⁹

It is not simply the practical experience of encountering diversity in the Claremont student body and a personal belief that theological education should be done in a climate of care that underlies this study. It is explicitly stated in institutional publications that diversity is valued and encouraged at CST. Further structural evidence can be seen in the CST catalog through the comments of both the President and the Dean. President Bob Edgar emphasizes the school's global context.

The Claremont School of Theology is a community of scholars preparing for the challenges of the 21st century. . . . Claremont is a loving, reconciling and affirming community that is not afraid of the difficult issues and tough questions that face our world today. . . . The diversity of our faculty and student body creates an excellent opportunity for all students to experience community by learning the different cultures that make up our fragile plant. The global nature of this community stands as a constant reminder of the need to understand and appreciate all of the world's people.¹⁰

Similarly, the letter from the Academic Dean highlights the importance of diversity in the Claremont community as follows:

⁹ Claremont School of Theology. Catalog, 1996-1998, 4-5.

¹⁰ Bob Edgar, "Letter from the President," Catalog, 1996-1998, 3.

You have become an essential part of a community of scholars who are engaged in a diversity of studies, who represent a diversity of cultures, and who bring a diversity of hopes and expectations. . . . Here you will find that your own particular uniqueness contributes to the richness of our common academic life. . . . And since we aspire to be a caring community, there is the commonality of daily courtesies given and received.¹¹

In 1995-96, the student body of Claremont was fifty percent second-career students, thirty-five years of age or older. Moreover, thirty-seven different denominations or religious traditions were represented, twenty-seven states in the U.S., and seven other countries. Women made up approximately 50% of the student body among the U.S. citizens and about 11% of international students.¹² The Claremont context also provides a way to begin to explore another question: What types of resources are helpful as a theological school seeks to provide a rich educational environment respecting, supporting, challenging, and encouraging a diverse study body? This question is particularly critical because, as its leadership clearly articulates, this community envisions itself as an inclusive, caring, loving, reconciling, and affirming community.

The Context of Concern about Theological Education

The history of the current debate about diversity in theological education is fairly short. As noted earlier, it began in earnest in the early 1980s with God's Fierce Whimsy, wherein the Mud Flower Collective identified as a feminist concern the fact that the educational model utilized in most schools was dominated by theories and methodologies developed by and for Euro/American heterosexual males from a specific and limited

¹¹ Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Letter from the Academic Dean," Catalog, 1996-1998, 13.

¹² "Registered Student Demographics, 1995-1996," Catalog, 1996-1998, 82-83.

socio-economic historical perspective. As the Collective observed, this model tends to neglect other perspectives, such as those based on the experience of women, persons of color, and lesbian and gay persons. A number of mainline theologians in the 1980s began to write about the crisis and “widespread discontent”¹³ in the church regarding theological education. They focused their approach, as noted by Rebecca Chopp, on how to “get the idea of theological education correct, to understand appropriately and adequately the idea of theological education before one turns to the subjects.”¹⁴ My study asserts that the current debate and acknowledged need for change were preceded by an unprecedented and inadequately studied demographic change in the population interested in theological education.

Given the reality of demographic shifts, schools like Claremont face the dilemma of deciding what and how to change in response to the shifting needs and backgrounds of its student population. My study asks the first-year students to evaluate some of their experience, in a limited way, in the context of a quantitative survey, and to comment on sources of support and their degree of satisfaction and personal evaluation of success. Each survey participant identified herself or himself by the following demographics: denomination, sex, age, racial/ethnic group/s, and relational circumstance.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset that this study did not ask participants to identify themselves by sexual orientation. I made the decision to neglect this area of demographic description and diversity because the issues raised by

¹³ Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., Christian Identity and Theological Education, (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985) 1.

¹⁴ Chopp, Saving Work, 9.

discussions of sexual orientation remain highly controversial in many religious traditions, specifically the United Methodist Church with whom approximately fifty percent of the survey population is affiliated. As with all quantitative research, the approachability of the survey instrument is a serious concern and impacts the response rate to that survey. However, as the reader will notice from the discussion in Chapter 2 and in the final discussion of areas in need of further research, I do think these are important concerns. I am convinced that sexual orientation, and matters of gender and sexuality more generally, are vital issues for creating a truly supportive environment for diversity in theological education and in the church at large.

I have chosen to study first-year students because, as an admission administrator who is also trained as a pastoral counselor, I observed that those persons beginning theological education experience a significant level of stress, disorientation and, often, disillusionment. Much of this may be necessary, a normal part of the adjustment process to a new career path, unfamiliar educational environment, and a diverse community. However, some of the unpleasant aspects of the first-year transition may reflect a lack of information and awareness, on the part of the school, of students' needs and experience in the theological education environment. That lack of information can and should be rectified. The statistical analysis provides an assessment, at least for this limited sample, of whether any specific demographic descriptors are predictive of any particular subjective responses. Further, whether or not there is any correlation between specific demographics and particular experiences, this study provides information that will help us understand more about how diversity impacts theological education as both challenge and opportunity.

As a pastoral theologian, I am convinced that the particular contextual and concrete experience of one of the primary groups participating in theological education, students, is a good starting point for a more complete understanding of what theological education should be.¹⁵ Larry Kent Graham provides a succinct description of pastoral theology as “the academic discipline that constructs general features of caregiving on the analysis of what occurs in the specific practice of the ministry of care.”¹⁶ Graham writes concretely about the movement from presence with persons and communities in need, and listening as the foundations of pastoral work, to a more active position. “At a certain point, pastoral theology requires more than empathic and receptive presence. It is also a theological discipline that presses what it hears into constructive religious interpretation. . . . [It] provides guidance for responding with authenticity and theological power to struggling persons and communities.”¹⁷

My study also expands on the classical pastoral care understanding of persons as “living human documents” by utilizing a quantitative research method, rarely employed in pastoral care and counseling, to understand what a specific cohort experiences as concerns, challenges, and sources of support and satisfaction at a particular time and place. Additionally, pastoral care and counseling and pastoral theology are based in a larger discipline of practical theology. Consequently, they share a concern for starting

¹⁵ Ibid., x-xi.

¹⁶ Larry Kent Graham, Discovering Images of God: Narratives of Care among Lesbians and Gays (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 124.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1.

with lived experience and the practice of ministry and, then, moving to develop theories and methodology. I have also grounded my study in a liberative ethic that defines pastoral care and counseling as fundamentally aimed at contributing to justice and opposed to structures of subordination, domination, and oppression. My concern for issues of diversity is based on and assumes a theological awareness of and reverence for the inherent worth and value of persons across the multiplicity of differences that may define them as individuals, in relationships, and as groups.

As a pastoral counselor, I have observed the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and relational struggles first-year students experience during their initial semesters of transition at a theological school. This study assumes that theological education has always offered some challenges and necessary disillusionment. It also assumes that seminaries have had both formal and informal support systems to assist students in their first-year transition. In a sense, as is often true for persons in the midst of other types of life transitions, these students offer a distorted view of the Claremont School of Theology. Experiences that are problematic initially may become valued and sometimes more comfortable over time. Similarly, other opportunities are ignored or undervalued by many first-year students. However, pastoral counselors are often, maybe a majority of times, sought out by individuals, families, and couples in transition or crisis. These times of change offer persons both the motivation and sometimes the inspiration to grow and seek healthier lives and relationships.

First-year students also offer a fresh perspective and an important critique because they come without a shared set of assumptions about theological education. Most importantly, there will always be first-year students. It is not an adequate pastoral,

theological, or educational response to nod knowingly and say, or at least think, “just hang in there, by your second year this will not be an issue.” Moreover, because the levels of difference and the types of diversity have grown significantly over a fairly short period of time, it may no longer be realistic to think that persons will resolve their transition issues with the simple passage of a couple of semesters. It is possible that the stress is higher and persons are more likely to drop out or transfer than they might have been when the student population was more homogenous. Due to the limits of the data collected, it will not be possible to compare the responses of these students with past groups of students. The importance of the results of this study lies in their ability to contribute to the success of future students.

Thesis

My central thesis is that a specific quantitative study of a small sample of theological students can yield new insights into critical issues facing theological education in the context of diversity, through constructive dialogue with experiences and theories drawn from pastoral care and counseling and pastoral theology. Specifically, the survey sample is drawn from a particular group of theological students, first-year students, at one place and time, namely the Claremont School of Theology in May 1997. The survey focused on their concrete experience of first-year studies and issues of diversity. The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute insights for providing an educational environment supportive of a student body characterized by diversity.

This study of a particular group of theological students, first-year students, at one place and time, namely the Claremont School of Theology, May 1997 focused on their

concrete experience with a concern for diversity, aims to help provide a better understanding of the complexity present. Moreover, careful attention to the experience of students provides an understanding of the “lived” nature of diversity in this context. Because diversity is inherent to the nature of the world, it is in the best interests of all persons and communities involved in graduate theological education to make the most of it. A pastoral care analysis can not only identify key concerns but also help support the educational mission so it functions better and makes the best use of the resources of its diverse communities. Because Claremont’s student population is more diverse, in many ways, than some other theological schools, the experience studied here may provide clues for solving problems other schools are just beginning to experience or may experience in the not-too-distant future.

As I begin this study, I am answering the invitation made by two participants in the current conversation about theological education. First, Rebecca S. Chopp invites a “‘second generation’ of research in theological education that is sensitive to issues of particularity and contextuality as it exists in theological education.”¹⁸ Second, as suggested by David H. Kelsey, I hope to contribute “to bring [ing] into the center of the conversation the . . . concrete character of theological education . . . [which] always takes place in some particular institutional setting located in a particular socioeconomic context . . . and is undergone by a particular student body.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Chopp, *Saving Work*, x.

¹⁹ David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological about a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 16-17.

The time is right for this sort of research. The last decade has witnessed an unprecedented intensification of concern and self-critique within mainline theological education about its character and purpose.²⁰ The published aspects of this conversation have been primarily from the perspective of institutional presidents, deans, and senior faculty members. The missing voices in this debate are those grounded in the concrete experience of a particular group of theological students interpreted through a pastoral theological and pastoral care lens. This study seeks to enrich the conversation about how to reform or transform theological education by offering a slice of life from the entering classes of 1996/97 at Claremont School of Theology.

Key Terminology

Culture/cultural: The term “culture” is used here inclusively both to identify commitments, identification, or solidarity with, or to, particular racial/ethnic communities and, generally, to include the typical way of doing things in a specific community. Therefore, it can be said that academic culture has certain characteristics. Liberal Protestant theological schools have generally assumed tendencies or culture. Specific age cohorts may share some “cultural” assumptions.

Diversity: For purposes of this study, the term “diversity” is utilized to describe the plurality of groups that self-designate in demographic categories. Some of the most significant of these descriptive categories are the following: race/ethnicity, sex, age, and relational situation. Diversity has become a central concept for describing groups of

²⁰ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 1-2.

persons because one of the most significant cultural influences in theological education is growing heterogeneity. Moreover, this study aims to encourage the understanding of diversity as both descriptive of the world in which we live and a positive value to be encouraged and supported pastorally, theologically, administratively, and structurally.

Pastoral Care: To define pastoral care in the context of theological education is to take into account the sea change that has occurred in our world, and is now rocking theological education and the mainline Protestant churches to their cores. I understand the pastoral care aspect of ministry to be an inclusive, responsive concern for persons and systems placed in a larger context: a world of accelerated change and transition. For instance, globalization is a phenomenon sweeping our lives on many levels. We live in a world where persons are

struggling to survive economically, politically, psychologically, and spiritually. . . . [Pastoral care helps persons] explore ways to face the upheaval and grief of change, to engage differences creatively, respond to fear, and help define the boundaries and create safe spaces while at the same [time] nurturing freedom, playfulness, and imagination.²¹

This is the type of pastoral care this study hopes to encourage in the context of theological education.

Context/contextuality: the definition of “context” or “contextuality,” for the purposes of this study, is an example of the complexity that comes from drawing from the resources of both a liberative ethic and liberation theologies and the more individually focused psychologies that inform pastoral care and counseling. Engel and Thistlethwaite

²¹ Kathleen D. Billman. “Pastoral Care as an Art of Community.” In The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches, ed. Christie Cozad Neuger (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press Press, 1996), 26.

explain that contextuality is often “misunderstood” by North American Protestant liberals to mean simply a focus on

individual human experience . . . as the starting point for theological reflection. . . . When a liberation theologian speaks of context, s/he means that one’s *social location* [original emphasis] is central to the theological task. Social location is not particular to the individual. It is a perspective shared by others of the group or class.²²

This study shares a concern for social location as defined by demographics such as age, race/ethnicity, sex, and relational situation.

However, this author is also concerned that persons’ needs and responses to the study instrument be evaluated and valued individually, as well. This study seeks to help define the contours of the complexity and ambiguity of the role of diversity in a theological school rather than foreseeing any direct predictable relationship between demographic descriptors and specific subjective evaluations and experiences. However, it is an important critique of my research that solidarity, social, political, and economic critical awareness has not been significantly integrated into this research and would provide additional helpful insights for further research. “Particularity” also refers to the subjective nature of human experience. Understanding the specific institutional, cultural, and personal situation in which an event occurs is vital to interpreting its potential value and meaning. The term “particularity” focuses on the way one person’s experience is in some ways limited to that one person, with her or his biases, at that one place and time.

Theological Education: For the purposes of this research project, the term “theological education” refers to degree programs offered at the graduate level by schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Specifically, this study

²² Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds., “Introduction.” Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 5.

addresses theological education within the Protestant traditions broadly understood as “mainline” or more recently “old-line” denominational traditions.²³

Methods

The primary research method employed for this study is survey research.

Assessments of the nature and quality of the education students received in their first year at Claremont have been solicited through a survey of all first-year students at the conclusion of spring semester 1997. The surveys provide, initially, descriptive information about the first-year students. Beyond the descriptive, a statistical analysis of the surveys has been done to identify the factors which correlate particular student traits with specific responses to the subjective questions about aspects of the Claremont School of Theology program.

I have focused on first-year students for two reasons. Firstly, my experience in Admission has led me to believe this is an important transitional time and; secondly, it is during the first semester or two of theological education that many students make the decision whether to withdraw or not and whether to transfer to another institution or not. Assessing some of the factors in student decisions about continuing theological education, and reasons for deciding, not only may flesh out retention statistics, but may also help to illustrate commonly encountered obstacles. They may also help illuminate

²³ Protestant denominations generally include all those Christian churches that are not Roman Catholic or from the Orthodox Christian traditions. The more populated of these include the following examples: American Baptist, American Methodist Episcopal, Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, The Episcopal Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist, and the United Methodist Church.

the support systems helpful for overcoming the challenges facing many theological students.

The entering classes of 1996/97 have been surveyed through a distribution of 105 surveys, one to each first-year student new to the Claremont School of Theology. The results of these student surveys are processed using Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS); specifically, multivariate regression methods of statistical analysis are utilized to determine correlations between particular elements in the survey. These survey results are entirely anonymous to encourage a high response rate and complete candor of response from participants. Fifty-five completed surveys were returned, a slightly better than fifty percent return rate, which exceeds the accepted standard for statistical validity. To achieve a fifty percent return rate, two reminder follow-ups to the primary survey were administered at the end of Spring Semester 1997: a postcard, and then a second survey with cover letter. The survey asked two types of questions: (1) demographic and descriptive questions, and (2) subjective questions asking students to evaluate their first-year educational experience at Claremont.

The results of this quantitative research have been evaluated and interpreted utilizing analytical methods developed by pastoral care and counseling professionals in response to issues of diversity. Due to the nature of their ministries, pastoral counselors serve in a broad variety of contexts and have been sensitized to the implications of “context” diverse populations. Finally, the insights of pastoral theology provide an additional framework for understanding the larger implications this work might have in the debate about the future of theological education.

Resources

The results of this study are compared with similar research regarding theological education done by ATS and a few other specific studies. One example of this comparable research data is found in a particularly helpful journal, Theological Education, which has included articles focusing on the student experience. The 1995 Supplement entitled “A Profile of Contemporary Seminarians Revisited” provides a summary of the results of stratified random sample of theological students surveyed who attended 49 different theological schools. These extended journal write-ups based on large national survey data provide a larger context in which to place my small focused study.²⁴ My data is also compared with the 1996-1997 summary data published about all accredited theological schools: Fact Book on Theological Education: For the Academic Year 1996-97 from The Association of Theological Schools.²⁵

Theological resources include a wealth of recent books and articles concerning the nature and purpose of graduate theological education within liberal mainline Protestant institutions. Of particular interest are those works that deal with the demographic diversification of students at these institutions in the last ten years.²⁶

²⁴ Larsen. “A Profile of Contemporary Seminarians Revisited.”

²⁵ Jonathan Strom and Daniel Aleshire. eds. Fact Book on Theological Education: For the Academic Year 1996-97. (Pittsburgh: Association of Theological Schools), 1997.

²⁶ Books that have provided the most helpful criterion for interpreting the results of this study are: Katie G. Cannon et al., (The Mud Flower Collective), God’s Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education; Rebecca Chopp’s Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education; the collection edited by Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley entitled Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 1991; David Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate and To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological about a Theological School; and Joseph Hough and John Cobb, Christian Identity and Theological Education.

David H. Kelsey's description of the contemporary debate's "internal movement and structure" in his book Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate provides a particularly useful typology.²⁷ In brief summary, Kelsey utilizes "Athens" as a symbol for one type or model of theological education and "Berlin" as the symbol for the other type. Kelsey is quick to acknowledge that neither type exists in a "pure" form. "Athens," rooted in classical Hellenism, represents a view of education where "*paideia*" is at the center. "In Greek *paideia* meant a process of 'culturing' the soul, schooling as 'character formation.'"²⁸ By contrast, "Berlin" finds its roots in the founding of the modern "research" university, University of Berlin in 1810. This model "stresses the interconnected importance of . . . *Wissenschaft* or orderly, disciplined critical research on one hand, and 'professional' education for ministry on the other."²⁹ In his other book focused on theological schools, To Understand God Truly, Kelsey elaborates a useful method for understanding the concrete context of a particular theological school and the implications this context has for an understanding of how it does theological education.

Resources for a pastoral theology, care, and counseling reading of diversity at a theological school are drawn from recent books on pastoral care and counseling, contextual ministry, and crisis ministry. Of particular interest are those offering feminist/womanist liberation perspectives, those that focus on issues of the "context of

²⁷ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

care” and the implications of cultural diversity, and multiculturalism and cross-cultural counseling, for the development of adequate models of pastoral care.³⁰

As pastoral theologian and caregiver, I am looking for how the theological analyses offer suggestions about the role and resources for improving or, if necessary, creating an environment of intentional pastoral care. I am particularly interested in discussions of theological education that aim at involving and supporting faculty, staff, and students as particular individuals and also various interrelated communities who need to work collectively to provide a healthy context for theological education given diversity. Because context and diversity are important and valuable concerns I have sought dialogue partners who take these issues seriously. Because pastoral care, and other arts and practices of ministry, are primarily learned through deductive processes I have focused on practitioners and theorists who are well-grounded in specific experiences of ministry. I intend my utilization of quantitative research method and data, rarely employed in pastoral care and counseling, to ground this study in data revealing specific cohort experiences, concerns, challenges, and sources of support and satisfaction at a particular time and place. Also, the emotional and relational aspects of discussing the role of diversity in theological education are not highlighted in many of the works I

³⁰ The following books are particularly helpful: David Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling across Cultures (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Aart M. Van Beek, Cross-Cultural Counseling (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996); Young-Il Kim, ed. Knowledge, Attitude, and Experience: Ministry in the Cross-cultural Context (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); Christie Cozad Neuger, ed. The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, ed. Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); Pamela Couture and Rodney Hunter, eds. Pastoral Care and Social Conflict: Essays in Honor of Charles V. Gerkin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), and Larry Kent Graham Care of Persons, Care of Worlds: A Psychosystems Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

reviewed or studied in depth. Part of my interest in this topic and reason for utilizing pastoral theology, care, and counseling is that I believe these disciplines may offer different approaches to the painful and often conflictual emotions present when there is significant diversity.

Fundamentally, concern for issues of diversity is based on and assumes a theological awareness of and reverence for the inherent worth and value of persons across the multiplicity of differences that may define them as individuals, in relationships, and as groups. My approach is a feminist one in that I am utilizing the work of feminist/womanist scholars and practitioners because I understand

the diversity of women's lives as a particular window into human need, the vast structures of systemic and private oppression that hinder fullness of life. . . . The reality of oppression results in feminism's close attention to issues of power, the application of a hermeneutic of suspicion. . . And [focus on the] empowerment and liberation of those who are marginalized.³¹

For justice reasons, the valuing and support of diverse communities for theological education is also a matter of working to restructure access to, and support for, theological education for communities who have been deprived of this opportunity. Moreover, placing a premium on cultural, ethnic and other types of diversity is also intended to support efforts by faculty and others in the wider church and society to restructure theological education for every student. This restructuring has been underway at Claremont (and schools like it) throughout much of its history; the focus here is to help expand the range of perspectives available to students to be as representative of the diversity of the world, in which we live and hope to serve, as possible.

³¹ Kathleen J. Geider, Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 7.

I am specifically consulting theorists and practitioners of pastoral care and counseling who have focused their published work on feminist/womanist perspectives, understanding cross-cultural issues in ministry, those who focus on contextuality, and, briefly, on a literature that helps define “crisis.” Part of what lies beneath and behind this research is the firm conviction that administration, pastoral care, teaching, and ministry are not primarily separable activities for most ministers. This is true even in the context of a theological school. We know that solo pastors in smaller churches or urban ministries bridging downtown ethnic communities find ways to meet these needs. Another underlying vision for this project is a “revisioning” of what diversity in liberal mainline Protestant theological education actually includes. This small study seeks to clarify that diversity is not a simple linear equation, even statistically. Theological educators and cross-cultural counselors already know this -- there is not a single perspective that defines a particular racial-ethnic group, economic group, or international group.

Howard Clinebell’s classic introductory text Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, as revised and enlarged in 1984, focuses one section of one chapter on “Making Counseling More Inclusive and Transcultural.”³² As has been the case with many issues in the development of pastoral counseling, secular psychology and psychiatry began to address issues of culture in mental health and treatment much earlier. A significant body of literature was developed in the clinical medical field in the 1960s and 1970s that included a cultural component. Most of the “secular” literature addressing

³² Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 96-101.

cultural difference developed on an individualistic and medical model. Finally, in 1986, David Augsburger published the first major book addressing the issue in the ministry context: Pastoral Counseling across Cultures. Since then other individual authors and collected works have addressed the issue of cultural location from a number of perspectives.³³

A feminist pastoral care perspective is particularly well suited to my concerns, given my social location. As a white, middle-class, female, ordained care-giver my best access to understanding the dynamics of exclusion, and improving my own analysis of the power structures at work in theological education, is to begin with my experience as a woman ordained. In this context I am very aware that ministerial positions are clearly still more accessible to men. Similarly, while I benefit from a number of talented articulate professors who are themselves from “other” perspectives and/or encourage the study of resources other than white male theologians and psychologists, pastoral care and counseling is still dominated, in some ways, by white male perspectives. Therefore, feminist and womanist perspectives and approaches to pastoral care and, in general, to the practice of ministry are the literature that help me ground my analysis in concrete

³³ Significant recent books addressing socio-cultural issues include: Maxine Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, eds. Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Edward Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1991); Young-Il Kim, ed., Knowledge, Attitude, and Experience; Linda Hollies, ed. Womanistcare: How to Tend the Souls of Women (Joliet, Ill: Woman to Woman Ministries Publications, 1991); Aart M. Van Beek, Cross-Cultural Counseling; Larry Kent Graham Discovering Images of God: Narratives of Care among Lesbians and Gays; and Joretta Marshall, Counseling Lesbian Partners (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). This is far from an exhaustive list of pastoral care and counseling books addressing cultural diversity and context of care, however, it does provide a sense of the breadth of perspectives and the growth of this literature in recent years.

experiences of exclusion and oppressive power dynamics based on sex and gender. A more in-depth use of this material will appear in Chapter 5 to help explicate a more adequate understanding of the diversity present in theological education.

In the recent collection Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care, Miriam Anne Glover-Wetherington focuses specifically on issues affecting women in theological education: “Pastoral Care and Counseling with Women Entering Ministry.”³⁴ She begins with an important point.

Since the issues for women entering ministry pervade all spheres of life, many different kinds of people are in a position to offer them either assistance and pastoral care or some form of hindrance. Pastors, chaplains, supervisors, pastoral counselors, professors, denominational and seminary administrators, seminary friends, ministerial colleagues, and family members all play important parts in the nurture of entering clergywomen. . . . [I]n this context I will refer to all such people as pastoral caregivers.³⁵

The broad range of potential caregivers is an important reality for women entering ministry because of the realities of sexism, defined as a bias based on a person’s sex alone. Moreover there is an on-going process, in most religious traditions, to understand the nature of human beings as male and female and how this embodied reality impacts a person’s gifts, talents, and call to ministry. These realities are further complicated by a growing awareness of the multiplicity of gender roles and range of sexualities represented in our communities. Recent sociological, psychological, and postmodern discussions of the diversity in human sexuality take seriously the historical

³⁴ Miriam Anne Glover-Wetherington, “Pastoral Care and Counseling with Women Entering Ministry,” in Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 66-93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

and cultural context of persons and communities. Sexualities are usually located in specific cultural places and times, realizing that there is much more variety than most persons are aware from group to group and situation to situation.

There is an important further point to be gleaned from Glover-Wetherington's inclusive description of potential caregivers for seminary students. Once a concern for diversity in theological education is a focus -- once there is *no* demographic majority -- then it is much more realistic to think in terms of *everyone* participating in pastoral support. On the negative side, Glover-Wetherington also mentions in passing that many persons may offer "hindrance." This is a realistic point: not everyone on the staff, faculty, and administration is going to be helpful, for various reasons, but one of the ways to understand a foundation level of pastoral care is procedures to "do no harm." In the world of academics and accreditation this is not new; there are usually procedures for review, filing complaints, and investigation of various types of communal issues. It is intriguing to consider how these policies and procedures might be understood and implemented differently if they were seen as an aspect of an inclusive pastoral care foundation for the multiple communities represented.

Any institutional pastoral care process needs to be deeply respectful of a wide range of ways to participate, including non-participation. This process will also be different for persons in different roles in the community. The responsibility of staff, administrators, and faculty is different because they are normally less transient than students and their participation is normally as paid work. Some sample questions to

consider: who bears the burden of negotiating more supportive interactions? How can the boundaries, space, and power -- particularly to “opt out,” for both students and staff or faculty -- be clearly presented and respected?

Glover-Wetherington identifies a number of important concerns for those supporting women entering the ministry. She provides a short section reviewing the more traditional usual concerns described here as “long-term, stable personality characteristics,” and reminds the reader that modern psychology has tended to encourage us to see persons’ problems as intrapsychic or related to specific crises in childhood. Glover-Wetherington is calling pastoral caregivers to go beyond the intrapsychic to seriously analyze and address the *external reality* women face going into ministry. She provides a helpful focus on the primary “contexts” women seminarians face.

[First] placement . . . an overview of attitudes toward clergywomen and how those attitudes affect both whether or not women can find ministry places and what types of positions are available. . . . [Second] internships . . . concentrates on how ambiguous attitudes create subtle put-downs or penalties in small daily church interaction. . . . [Third] women’s relationships to seminary and ministerial colleagues. . . . [Fourth] the study of relationships . . . with families and romantic friendships.³⁶

Another important resource for understanding the context in theological education is the influence of the modern medical model. Because the situation facing theological education has been characterized as a “crisis,” it is important to consider briefly what constitutes a crisis. It is probably fair to say that the modern medical model has influenced theologians writing about the ‘crisis’ in theological education. It has also influenced those in pastoral care and counseling practice, teaching, and research.

³⁶Glover-Wetherington, 72.

In the case of the use of the metaphor, or diagnosis, of there being a 'crisis' in theological education, it is helpful to note that a patient is considered critical, or in crisis, when their situation is at a point where it must clearly improve or degenerate rapidly. Therefore, a crisis presents *both* threat and opportunity and is defined by its instability and the necessity of movement or change in some direction. It is interesting to reflect on whether theological education is, in fact, in a 'crisis,' or not, and from whose point of view? Has it reached the critical point where positive change must happen or deterioration is inevitable?

The basic resource for statistical analysis is SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences). This program performs standard and advanced statistical analyses and produces graphs and figures illustrating the results. The interpretation of these results is based on standard statistical theory and norms. Statistical analyses include basic frequencies for each survey item, comparisons between a few particular variables, and advanced statistics such as multiple regression.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to one theological school--the Claremont School of Theology--and to first-year students entered fall 1996 or spring 1997, surveyed at one time, May 1997. It is important to acknowledge that both these students and the institution, as a whole, have obviously continued to grow and change. This type of limited cross-sectional quantitative study provides only a slice of experience from that time and place and, hence, to be utilized more broadly, must be reinterpreted in light of the current situation, by current staff, administration, faculty and students.

Both the particular school chosen and the general literature on theological education primarily represent mainline Protestantism. There are clearly limits to the levels of diversity being studied here, because theological education has, like most graduate education, remained somewhat elite; it is, hence, still much less diverse than many other types of communities across the United States today. However, the scope of this study does include a greater diversity within one segment of a particular community than is usually included in discussions of theological education. For example, this study includes younger single students recently graduated from college, from a number of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and second career persons with families and a broader range of life experience. It includes part-time and full-time students, commuters and residential students, U.S. citizens and international students, and those who consider themselves “theologically conservative” as well as the “theologically liberal.” The growing presence of women in theological education has clearly had an impact on Claremont for at least thirty years. Women are proportionally represented in this study. The scope of this research is also unusual in that it spans the fields of pastoral care, pastoral theology, and theological education administration.

The social location and particularity of the researcher also affect both the scope and limitations of this research. As a white, economically privileged, ordained Presbyterian (USA), married, woman doctoral student who began my theological education at 23 years of age, I have benefited from opportunities available to me because of my social location. It is vital for me to guard against racial and economic assumptions because I have particularly benefited as a white person and as someone raised in a primarily middle or upper-middle class situation. My pastoral, clinical, and

administrative experience has begun to sensitize me, in concrete ways, to the real nature of racist and classist oppression in U.S. society. I am hopeful that careful attention to the data describing concrete experiences of each participant in this survey will help guarantee that all the groups represented in this sample receive a faithful hearing. Additional challenges facing this researcher are to be open to survey comments that indicate a critique of the research instrument and, in some cases, the underlying value of diversity in theological education, which I have assumed.

In general an important critique of this type of limited quantitative research is raised by principles of liberation theology and liberation ethics. This survey is invariably biased by the economic, political, education and other systems in which it was formed and in which this researcher was raised and currently lives. A self-critical awareness is just as essential in quantitative studies as in qualitative research. It is impossible to achieve a bias-free perspective; however, critical awareness and self-disclosure provide tools for both the researcher and the reader to evaluate the validity of the outcomes and inferences. It is a valid critique that the vital importance of solidarity with those who are most oppressed in our local and global worlds is only mentioned in passing in this research. Moreover, a more critical awareness of the political and economic realities facing theological education would be very helpful. These are areas ripe for further research and study.

Importance of the Topic, Original Contribution

Fundamentally, the goal of this study is to bring the voices of students from a diverse student body into the current debate about the very nature, purpose, and future of

Protestant theological education in the United States. This research directly addresses the question of how increasing levels of diversity in theological education impact student experience. This study also brings a pastoral theological and pastoral care and counseling analysis into the larger debate. For reasons that are not entirely clear, these particular practical theological voices have not been heard in this important conversation. Pastoral perspectives in theological education have often been segregated into reflections on the field education experience or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training usually included in Master of Divinity programs.

Therefore, one of the important and original implications of this work is an identification of tools to promote a broad pastoral care approach for all participants in a theological school. This researcher generally believes that an environment that can best facilitate theological education for a diverse student body includes staff and faculty who practice a basic level of pastoral care as well as teach and administer from particular expertise. It is hoped that the unique research perspective provided by the combined insights of an administration viewpoint (specifically concerns for recruitment, matriculation, and retention), with pastoral theology, care and counseling will produce both a better understanding of the current situation and point toward structures for improvement.

A question for today is whether theological education is continuing to meet enough of the expectations and needs of its current students. Moreover, since the current debate indicates that “change is in the air,” this study also asks who should be involved in decision making about the transformation already in progress. It is the prejudice of this researcher, and the general position taken at the institution where the study is situated,

that diversity is not only a “reality” but of positive value to the process of persons receiving an excellent theological education. It is clear that diverse perspectives are often valued and provide a rich learning and research environment. Diverse backgrounds also challenge established assumptions about both the nurture of knowledge and the process of learning. Theological education, in some ways, due perhaps to the slowness of change in religious institutions, has not had to address issues of diversity and conflicting perspectives and values with the same urgency that has faced most colleges and universities since the 1960s. There is much we can learn by greater dialogue with such “secular” institutions about both the value and the challenges of diversity. Due to the many levels of diversity in a fairly small educational institution, (approximately three hundred students, thirty faculty, and forty-some administrators and staff) it is incumbent on theological schools like Claremont to be self-aware. Institutional self-awareness is an on-going process that requires sustained effort, research, and structures of accountability.

It is my hope that this research project offers some contribution to this effort. Hopefully it provides some helpful perspectives on student experience. More importantly, hopefully the study of student experiences will continue to be part of the institutional process of this diverse educational environment, a community of communities, that is the Claremont School of Theology. Finally, this research endeavors to contribute a vital new perspective to the theological debate currently raging regarding the changed and changing character of seminary education.

Chapter Outline

This “Introduction” launches the study by providing a review of the major contexts in which this work is situated: the author’s background and professional location, the particular school being studied, the scope and limitations of the study; and resources being utilized. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the important recent literature in the debate about the nature and purpose of theological education. Both more “liberal” and more “conservative” perspectives are included in this survey. Also, an overview of selected theorists and practitioners of pastoral care and counseling, who have researched and written about cross-cultural ministry and feminist/womanist perspectives are included in this chapter. Chapter 3 reviews the research method and design of the survey. Chapter 4 presents the results of the survey data and an interpretation of the statistics, and a discussion of their significance in comparison to other recent quantitative studies of theological students. Chapter 5 focuses on developing the implications of this study for the future of theological education in terms of a redefinition of the nature of the diversity that is present and significant in theological education. Chapter 6 closes this study by returning to the question: What role, or roles, might diversity play in the future of theological education? It also identifies areas in need of further study. One such area, which has not been mined for its contribution to improving theological education given the reality of diversity, is the pastoral literature dealing with the resolution--or, perhaps more appropriately creative management or utilization--of conflict in contexts of ministry. It is clear to this researcher that a certain level of tension and conflicting interests is a natural and potentially healthy aspect of theological education in the context of diversity.

Theological Assumptions

Another context in which this research is located is that of my personal background in theological education, concerns, and agenda. Although I have worked to be self-aware and to utilize logical rationales and analyses in my work, my own perspective is bound to influence all aspects of the work. For that reason, I would like to articulate some of my agenda to provide another layer of context.

Underlying this research is a social science approach that values the discovery of new and surprising results and aims to evaluate survey data, and other research regarding theological students, objectively. From a sociologist's point of view, I am concerned to learn implications my data and results may have for understanding the structures of our society, especially "the distribution of status, prestige, and power in our society,"³⁷ as they are visible in theological education. Specifically, how does a theological school help students experience support, empowerment, access to resources, and success in its specific context? It is not only my theological, pastoral, and ethical values that inspire my research to understand the roles diversity and context play in theological education. Many social science researchers value context and diversity. As David Drew states in his recent study of math and science education: "Science occurs in a social context. . . . Our scientific theories, hypotheses, and interpretations will be strengthened if the research is conducted and informed by people with differing world-views and cultural perspectives."³⁸

³⁷ David E. Drew, Aptitude Revisited: Rethinking Math and Science Education for America's Next Century, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), x-xi.

³⁸ Ibid. 17.

Having served as an administrator at three different theological schools and as a trained pastoral counselor, my own experience confirms some findings from my surveys and causes me to question others. As an ordained clergyperson, called to the "ministry of word and sacrament," I am biased by my belief in the all-inclusive nature of God's grace as properly understood as available to all persons regardless of any issues of difference. This grace may be seen in terms of concrete needs such as physical access to classrooms and worship, as well as in terms of the less tangible realities such as access to encouragement, a sense of a supportive environment, or staff who are open and willing to work on practical concerns and problems.

A social sciences and theologically critical analysis also leads me to review potential valuations of diversity. Three different underlying valuations come to mind:

1. Diversity is a problem or challenge to evaluate and overcome so that a unified approach may be disseminated and appropriated by all students regardless of age, sex, or ethnic/cultural background, or other difference.
2. Diversity is a resource to be utilized that can benefit all students involved; but it is an optional element that can be addressed as educators have the time and energy, and expertise.
3. Diversity is a given--a gift (theologically one might say 'of God') -- which requires acknowledgement and appropriate response; it is wasteful and short-sighted not to respond positively and proactively to reap the benefits of this multifaceted resource.

My bias is clearly toward the third valuation of diversity. There are, no doubt, other such conceptual assumptions on which this research is built. The hope is that a careful

presentation of the design and results of the survey will provide a relatively clear picture of the scope, limitations, and assumptions of this research.

I believe that theological education has, can, and should contribute to the transformation of personal, spiritual, group, church, religious and secular, and cultural and political realities. I remember clearly the meeting of my local presbytery at which I received authorization to be ordained as a Minister of the Word. Toward the end of the presbytery's questioning someone asked the traditional catechism question: "What is the chief end and purpose of man?" I smiled at the archaic language, but almost without thought responded: "to love and serve God and enjoy him forever." Embedded in my understanding of love, service, and enjoyment is a deep belief that the church is called to work for justice and in opposition to structures of oppression and subordination. Ultimately, of course, the full completion of this vision is a utopian goal. The fulfillment of Jewish and Christian scriptural understandings of the Jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord, is a radical hope based in the experience of divine grace and action. However, Christians are called to work toward a vision of creation made whole.

Theological education is deeply connected to my fundamental understanding of the Christian call. It is vital that persons who have the gifts, talents, and passion to devote themselves to service in the church and the world be challenged to expand their knowledge and experience beyond parochial limits. It is also important that the professional leadership of seminaries, theological schools, and divinity schools continue to challenge themselves to a standard of excellence, including prophetic discernment concerning the issues of the day.

I have developed my viewpoint on theological education over time, first, as a Master of Divinity student, then, as a clinical pastoral education (CPE) resident and hospital chaplain. This was followed by experience in doctoral studies integrating theology and personality theories from pastoral care and counseling perspectives and pastoral counseling clinical experience. And finally, having serving served as an administrator for seven years in three different theological schools. I am convinced that theological education has already undergone a metamorphosis. It simply *is* something different from what it has ever been before. The globalization, pluralization, and diversification of the world in which we live are walking in the door of theological education everyday. The Association of Theological Schools has been supporting surveys of theological students for over ten years. Schools, including Claremont, have done curriculum revisions, set up classes schedules to accommodate part-time and evening students, and launched satellite programs to offer theological education in parts of the United States that do not have accredited theological schools. National programs have been funded and mentoring relationships structured to support more persons of color and women to pursue doctoral studies; at almost every mainline theological school faculty recruitment is self-consciously focused on increasing the diversity on theological school faculties. Some conservative critics see this process as a threat to the future of quality theological education and ministerial preparation. Changes are happening--on many levels--diversity and dramatic change present great riches and opportunities. The many types of response to diversity are essential and responsible strategies to address the sea change that has come and is still coming. This study of first-year students is in no

way intended as a critique of the many and significant changes that are already underway, at the Claremont School of Theology or any other theological school, for that matter.

This study provides some encouraging feedback that students from a wide variety of socio-cultural backgrounds are generally pleased with how their needs are addressed. This study also provides some specific suggestions for improvement, from students' points of view. Most importantly, this study intends to provide a better understanding of the connections between specific demographic descriptors and subjective evaluations. Moreover, even if the statistical findings are not broadly generalizable, a pastoral care perspective and a pastoral theology intended to address issues of diversity in theological education can have a wider application. It is my hope that the framework I provide might serve to encourage others who minister within the context of particular theological schools to articulate and share their insights, successes, and challenges. It seems clear that theological education is in some jeopardy, given the sheer volume of published theological debate. Perhaps it is really no more so than in other seasons of change; but, nonetheless, it is a time to pool our wisdom in these matters. It is too easy to "circle the wagons" and see other theological schools as competitors for the often-perceived limited resources of quality students, faithful donors, and outstanding faculty. The future of theological education, and its contribution to the churches and society, lies in the risky, time-consuming process of open dialogue and shared information and resources for the sake of a vision of the common good. It is my sense, having studied this topic with some intensity, that different theological schools have always had different strengths and weaknesses and are a better or worse "match" for specific students for a multitude of reasons. This is still true. While different denominational traditions face tough decisions

around stewardship of resources to support all the existing theological schools, it is my view that in this arena, as well as in student populations, and faculty members, a significant level of diversity contributes to “the common good.” However, this study has not been designed to evaluate reasonable limits for diversity. The economic and denominationally functional questions of number and location of seminaries are pressing issues. I believe they should be investigated in light of the larger question of how to establish just and functional understandings of limits to diversity in the context of theological education.

As I have worked to complete this particular research and writing, I have considered what I would say, in short summary, in response to the question “what is the purpose of theological education?” My current working response to that question is that the purpose of theological education, looking toward the start of a new century and a new millennium is: to assist persons and communities in their struggle to understand how and what God is calling them to be and to do. This includes participation in the ongoing process of creation and recreation initiated and sustained by God toward a fuller expression of God’s justice and mercy for all creation, human, animal, plant, earth, and all the cosmos. Practically, however, it is my hope that this study helps to illustrate the transformative power of theological education for particular students, from all walks of life, for theological school communities who provide it, and for the church and the world in need of strong, thoughtful, creative, and diversely talented leadership.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

One way to understand the purpose of this review of literature is in terms of a consultation with experts whose area of professional competency is different from my own. As a pastoral counselor in a clinical setting, I consulted with a psychiatrist, psychologist, and social worker to better understand the medical, family, and social systems aspects of clients' situations. In the context of this study, I am consulting theologians who have written on the crisis in theological education. I have chosen to begin my review of selected recent works with the Mud Flower Collective's study because it raised the issue of diversity--beyond gender diversity--to the forefront of discussions about theological schools.¹

I am also consulting these expert theologians for their insights into how to identify and build on the existing health and resources for growth and/or healing of the pain that has motivated theological education to "seek treatment" at this time. I believe a significant motivation for "treatment" within mainline theological education are the demographic changes faculty, administrators, and denominational officials are experiencing, their discomfort with the rapid pace of change, and the widening gap between what they see today and their experience when they were theological students. In this chapter, I am looking to the literature being written by experts in

¹ The Cornwall Collective introduced some of the concerns for diversity explored here in their groundbreaking study entitled Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Feminist Alternatives in Theological Education (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980). A broader study of women in ministry was also published around that time and is still considered one of the most comprehensive of its kind: Jackson Carroll, Barbara Hargrove, and Adair Lummis, Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).

theology and pastoral theology, care, and counseling. I am particularly looking at these sources to note whether they explicitly acknowledge and address issues of diversity as both a source of tension and a resource for growth, healing, and change.

Contextual Sensitivity

A number of recent texts on pastoral care and counseling focus on contexts of care as a primary concern for pastoral care and counseling. Larry Kent Graham describes his view this way: "To care for persons is to create new worlds; to care for the world is to build a new personhood. The destiny of persons and the character of the world are intertwined."² Graham's analysis provides a methodology for understanding both individuals and organizations in terms of context.

Because pastoral care and counseling and the language of "crisis" rely heavily on the medical model, it is important to take a moment to outline a few of the assumptions of this model which may be problematic to an adequate understanding of diversity in theological education. Firstly, much of the literature of the history of medicine "ignored the role of cultural components."³ In other words, because modern medicine strove to understand itself as a 'pure science,' it did not fit the paradigm to include an understanding of factors as subjective as cultural beliefs, religious trends, and political power shifts. Beginning around 1980, "post-modern medicine" is apparently showing

² Larry Kent Graham. Care of Persons, Care of Worlds: A Psychosystems Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 13.

³ Bonnie Miller-McLemore. Death, Sin and the Moral Life: Contemporary Cultural Interpretations of Death (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 63. Miller-McLemore provides a brief discussion of the lack of consideration of cultural factors in the development of a history of medicine.

signs of being more “conscious of the finitude and uncertainties of its own knowledge . . . [of] reevaluating and expanding its understanding of causation and responsibility for disease to include social and psychological factors.”⁴

A second characteristic of modern medicine that may be limiting for a deeper understanding of context and culture has been its focus on the individual and on a scientific understanding of a “mono-causal germ theory of disease. . . . [and a] positivistic emphasis on exact diagnosis and prognosis, empirical tests and measurable signs of disease.”⁵ In other words, the crisis intervention method developed in medicine and psychology in the 1940’s seeks a single event, disease, or disorder and the individual’s response to that event as the key to successful treatment and resolution. The individualism of the approach also tends to ignore the larger context in which disease or crisis are located and tends to disregard the power dynamics and roles various persons and groups may play in a particular conflict, transition, or transformation. There are a number of other cultural factors that can be identified in medical history.

Another related issue that the modern medical model tends to bring to pastoral care and counseling discussions is an assumption that relief of symptoms and cure of disease is always a desirable goal or outcome. In the case of the crisis in theological education and the role of diversity, it may be that a certain level of conflict and confrontation with the limitations of traditional theological education is ultimately a very good and productive response. Pastoral and prophetic concerns for meaning-making and

⁴ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Death, Sin and the Moral Life*, 70-71, citing Renee Fox, *Essays in Medical Sociology: Journeys into the Field*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979), 523-29.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

social transformation have long struggled to remain dominant priorities in the face of what appears to be a simpler, more direct, equation of correct specific diagnosis linked to discrete treatment equaling cure and health.

Liberal Theologians Writing about Theological Education

A number of senior theologians teaching and providing leadership at major mainline Protestant theological schools have taken time to address the nature and purpose of graduate theological education. Some of these scholars have observed the vast shifts in demographic diversification of students at these institutions in the last ten years to fifteen years.

Setting the Stage

In 1985 a book was published as the collective effort of seven “racially and ethnically mixed women in theological education.”⁶ God’s Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education includes the authors’ description of the painful process of their work to name, hear, and write about their diverse experiences. This group named themselves the Mud Flower Collective.⁷ They placed their work in “continuity” with the 1980 publication Your Daughters Shall Prophesy, also authored by a group of women, The Cornwall Collective. The Cornwall Collective focused their efforts only on the experience of women in theological education. I begin my review of literature with God’s Fierce Whimsy because it is the first major work addressing

⁶Cannon et al., x.

⁷ “In naming ourselves Mud Flower, we claim the *yet unrealized vision of solidarity* reflected in a poem by Delores Williams.” Ibid., ix. Emphasis added.

multiple types of diversity – sex, racial/ethnic, and class. My study of the impact of diversity on first-year students at Claremont is structured to look at various types of diversity and the interplay between them.

The Mud Flower Collective named as the purpose of their book to “show what theological education can be and . . . must be if we Christians are truly interested in human well-being and in knowing how to serve the common good.”⁸

[W]e believe that racial and cultural diversity is indispensable to education. . . . Either the whole of the theological enterprise (biblical, theological, historical disciplines included) takes place amid cultural diversity, or theological educators miss the point of inclusivity and the universality of the love of God and are, in fact peddlers of impractical theology.⁹

God’s Fierce Whimsy was constructed through a process of meetings and written dialogue between the participants. It is not only the content of the book but also the process by which it was written and the form it took that carry the message of new ways to do theological education that is more respectful of diverse voices and divergent perspectives. One insight from the Mud Flower Collective that supports my study of first-year students at Claremont is that particularity surfaces issues of race/ethnic privilege, sexism, and classism so that they can be begin to be adequately addressed. The Mud Flower Collective based their work on the powerful truths of their own particular stories. They highlight the tendency of dominant persons and groups to universalize their experience and, thereby, deny the validity of divergent perspectives.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Ibid., 30.

Such terms as the human condition, the absolute, and the truth, are likely to convey a failure on the part of theologians to recognize the diversity and relativity of cultures, conditions, and experiences that constitute the vast array of human life. . . . This refusal to consider the particularities of different peoples and cultures is fundamental to the malaise of theological education. . . . Most of the problems between and among us, most particularly those perpetrated against women of all colors and against black and Hispanic men, are related directly to the failure of most white men and many white women to deal with the particularities of our own lives.¹⁰

The most telling critique of theological education presented by the Mud Flower Collective is their discussion of sexuality. They present a united perspective that addressing lesbianism in the context of a theological school is more difficult than any other single issue. My decision to neglect gender issues, beyond simple biological sex identification as demographic descriptor, because of my concern over how it would effect the return rate on my survey (fifteen years after the Mud Flower Collective identification of this *very* tendency) speaks volumes about the continuing difficulties preventing open discussion and acceptance of a diversity of sexualities in most theological schools.

However, as stated in chapter 1, I share with these and other theologians, clergy, and educators the belief that we must, as Christian communities, find a way to talk openly and respectfully about our embodied sacred realities, including diverse sexualities and gender roles. I am saddened by the fact that I determined it was necessary to achieving significant participation in this study to exclude this important aspect of persons' self-understanding and its impact on their experience of theological education. However, the reader will note in a few of the open-ended responses to this survey that some persons shared information about sexuality or responses to their exposure to this issue within their first year. The potential truth in my decision may lie in my gut level

¹⁰ Ibid., 91-93.

understanding of the vital power and complexity of sexuality, which is not well defined by simple descriptive categories.

Finally, God's Fierce Whimsy concludes with the reiteration that "the process is content" and the best way to teach theological education is to "demonstrate" the concepts--there is no real separation between theory and method according to these feminist theological educators. In their final chapter, they further illustrate the interdependency of theory and practice by articulating the limits of their work--the gaps in what they were able to accomplish. They describe their own experience, in this very project, of racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism, both individual and structural forms, and the limits and barriers these prejudices created to their work. The Mud Flower Collective also defined a number of important issues they never really addressed: motherhood, the writing and language process, and the choice to finish the book rather than work to resolve tensions in relationships within the Collective. I find it striking, painful, and inspiring to read the Mud Flower Collective's honest confession of the limits of a particular collaborative research project.

The book closes with three clear categories of implications for theological education. First, "the fundamental goal of theological education must be doing justice;" it is described as "requiring the liberation of all people from structures of oppression," and "excellence" in scholarship must require commitment to justice and understanding of the relationship between various structures of injustice.¹¹ Second, assumptions about theological education curriculum must be reconsidered in light of cultural pluralism and a

¹¹ Cannon et al., 204.

changed understanding of excellence and competence as well as challenge to “an assumption of knowledge as detached from the life experience of the knower.”¹² Third, “pedagogical method” must be addressed because “the process is the content.”¹³ This involves a new understanding of theory, action, collective process, dialogue, mutuality, learning from mistakes, accountability, collaboration, and what I am calling in this study, contextuality and particularity.

John B. Cobb, Jr. and Joseph C Hough, Jr. published Christian Identity and Theological Education the same year as God’s Fierce Whimsy was published. Hough and Cobb’s book, like the Mud Flower Collective’s, was part of the larger study of theological education launched by the Association of Theological Schools with funding from the Lilly Endowment. It is a response to what they describe as “widespread discontent with the schools providing . . . [theological] education.”¹⁴ They begin their discussion with a review of the problem facing theological schools as they see it.

Hough and Cobb develop their perspective by summarizing Edward Farley’s book Theologia.¹⁵ They agree with Farley that theological education is in need of a basic unity undergirding all the particular subject matter studied. Farley calls this “*theologia*” and Hough and Cobb find the actual definition of this term “maddeningly elusive.” Therefore, they begin their work by defining the basic unity underlying theological

¹² Ibid. 204.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hough and Cobb. 1.

¹⁵ Edward Farley, Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

education as “the clarification of Christian identity as the basis for Christian practice.”¹⁶

As a part of their development of an understanding of Christian identity, they provide a historical overview of the changes in the role of a “professional” minister over the last three hundred years. They propose a new understanding of professional as “reflective practitioner” and, in the context of the church, as “practical theologian.”¹⁷ As one might expect, Hough and Cobb then return to a discussion of “the identity of the church,” since they argue this identity is what is needed to address the underlying fragmentation of theological education.

Their proposal begins with the choice of a “world historical approach” to church. This is formed as an understanding of the global context of the church as well as the historical context. By historical context they mean that “what God is doing can be understood only in the context of concrete places and times.” They review the Judeo-Christian story and much of Christian church history with a clear reminder of the “innumerable sins of the churches” over time. Through this review of a world-historical understanding of the church, they develop a definition of Christian identity as “the community which keeps alive the memory of Jesus Christ in the world.”¹⁸ Within this context, they also warn of the “distortions of Christian identity,” including anti-Jewish teaching and practice, misogyny (including the use of exclusively male language), and racism. They also address the need for Christians to overcome dualistic thinking: “an identity created by Israel’s history as appropriated though Jesus Christ means accepting

¹⁶ Hough and Cobb, 18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 19–48.

the whole world as the object of God's concern. . .[this is] the ecosociopolitical context within which we now seek to be faithful.¹⁹ By this they mean that the United States' churches are called to consider world conditions, including world hunger, the threat of nuclear catastrophe, militarism, population growth, and environmental crises, to name a few global concerns among many they review.

I am impressed by the prophetic challenge evident in Hough and Cobb's definition of Christian identity and, at the same time, reminded of the numbing effect a review of the global nature of suffering can have. My awareness of the psycho-spiritual effect of theological perspectives is an example of a tool that pastoral theological, care, and counseling brings. I am left struggling with the question of what might be ethical and adequate human responses to both the global context and to the enormity of historical and current suffering. The significance of their proposal to my study of the experience of first-year students at Claremont in 1997 may be that to take seriously socioeconomic and cultural diversity in even a microcosm of less than five hundred persons can make a difference. Perhaps an intentional approach to diversity on not only the academic and intellectual level but also administrative level and support services and in terms of emotions, spirituality, and physical realities will provide participants with experiences they can use in other contexts of church and society.

Hough and Cobb define the church, in a global historical perspective, as "the community that keeps alive the memory of Jesus Christ in the world." They move from this definition to develop an understanding of the practice of the Christian community. They offer some "guiding images" for the practice of Christian community for which

¹⁹ Ibid. 43.

theological education prepares leaders. They name eleven ways to see the church in faithful practice:²⁰

1. The Church as Human Community
2. The Church as Caring Community
3. The Church as an Evangelistic Community
4. The Church for the World
5. The Church for the Poor
6. The Church for All Peoples
7. The Church for Women
8. The Church as Integrator
9. The Church as a Community of Repentance
10. The Church as the Community of Holiness
11. The Church as Worshipping Community.

What are the implications of this development of “Christian identity” and an understanding of the church for the actual practice of theological education? Can we realistically say that the diversity of theological and denominational, let alone personal, viewpoints represented at even one school, can be summarized into a shared understanding of Christian identity? As a pastoral theologian and caregiver, I am not certain that it is realistic or respectful of the diversity represented to even speak of a theological school as a single “community.” I am moving in the direction of speaking of a theological school as more of an “environment,” which is supportive and inclusive of a wide variety of diversity and which struggles to limit that diversity only when necessary for the survival of a viable ecosystem.

²⁰ Ibid., 49-76.

Hough and Cobb also address the issue of professional church leadership specifically. “Given the general identity of the Christian community and the implications of that identity, what sort of leadership does it need?”²¹ Hough and Cobb then return to their earlier review of the historical development of the image of a “professional.” They clarify that they are focusing on the tasks of professional leadership but understand the church’s leadership as much broader--inclusive of “nonprofessional leadership that . . . makes professional leadership possible.”²² They are also clear that professional leadership is not only done by ordained clergy. They describe the current dominant image as “minister as manager” and discuss the inadequacy of this image for church leadership. Out of this critique they propose the image of the minister as “Practical Theologian,” which incorporates two specific parts: “Practical Christian Thinker” and “Reflective Practitioner.”²³ From the first part, “Practical Christian Thinker,” they summarize the following:

[The] most important requirements of the professional Christian leader: . . . first, a clear Christian identity; second, an extensive and reflective understanding of what constitutes that identity; third, self-consciousness as to how that Christian identity shapes the perceptions of the present concrete world-historical situation; fourth, wise discernment of the implications of this Christian perception for action.²⁴

Secondly, they develop the idea of minister as reflective practitioner by utilizing Donald Schoen’s work on the changing understanding of all professionals.²⁵ They

²¹ Ibid., 77.

²² Ibid., 77.

²³ Ibid., 81.

²⁴ Ibid., 84.

²⁵ Hough and Cobb, 87-88, citing Donald Schoen. The Reflective Practitioner (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

summarize his premise: “at every step of the way, the leader is thinking about the nature of certain problems of practice, the means of resolving those problems, and the way in which this mode of practice serves the vision of the institution.”²⁶ The significance of this change in the idea of what a professional is seems to be at least twofold; first, ministers are no longer the designated “experts” who are called upon to apply the correct theory or technique to a particular situation. This new model is one where ministers “work with those they serve” in a collaborative learning and problem-solving relationship. The second important implication Schoen identifies is that the relationship between research and practice is changed: research is done by practitioners.²⁷

Toward the end of their work, Hough and Cobb combine the practical Christian thinker and the reflective practitioner to create a new image of the professional minister as the “practical theologian.” They are careful to say that this understanding is specific to the needs of the church in North America in this day and age, not in all times and places. The practical theologian helps to address the issue of Christian identity that they have identified as essential to addressing current church concerns. Unlike many earlier images of the minister, Hough and Cobb point out that their focus on practical theology is not a focus on function or a specific role. Practical theology is unifying because it “is a mode of reflection that continuously reevaluates the use of time and energy in and by the church in light of what the church truly is.”²⁸

²⁶ Hough and Cobb, 85.

²⁷ Ibid., 87-88.

²⁸ Ibid., 92.

The final chapter of Christian Identity and Theological Education is dedicated to reviewing the role of theological education in the development of practical theologians. The focus of this chapter is clearly on curriculum design. Hough and Cobb suggest how seminary courses contribute to the formulation of Christian identity through historical and biblical perspectives as well as how the global context can be emphasized. They also offer a discussion of practical Christian thinking in terms of theology and ethics courses and the need to break down the divisions between disciplines in theological education and incorporate pressing real-world concerns into all course work. Based on this argument for the need to work across disciplinary lines, Hough and Cobb also argue that psychological, sociological, spiritual disciplines, denominational perspectives, arts, and mass media are best integrated into the larger curriculum rather than added as specialized courses.

The final section of this chapter addresses the specific experience-based learning that persons seeking ordination need, in addition to the regular course work provided by the seminary. Hough and Cobb “propose that the churches assume the majority of the responsibility for the education in reflective practice.”²⁹ They suggest a one or two-year post- seminary probationary experience prior to full ordination status. This period would be spent in an established teaching congregation under close supervision by an experienced clergyperson. The seminary would contribute to preparation for reflective practice by encouraging the study of congregation as context during regular course work including a review of models of practice from others professions such as teaching,

²⁹ Ibid., 120.

counseling, and management. Hough and Cobb also include “contextual education,” based in local congregations, that does not reestablish field work within the curriculum but does encourage students to be involved in local congregations throughout their seminary studies.³⁰

New Approaches: Theological Education and Contextuality

Barbara G. Wheeler, one of the editors of Shifting Boundaries, introduces this work by delineating a number of ways in which the current “reexamination” of theological education is different than previous discussions on the topic. “[N]otable . . . [is] the involvement of faculty, the rapid appearance of scholarly resources for thinking about theological education, and the new theological cast to the conversation.”³¹ Wheeler summarizes the focus of these essays: “the purpose of this volume is to provide resources for those inevitably difficult but critically important discussions of structure and associated issues [for theological education].”³² Wheeler provides the following summary of key concerns this collection addresses. She writes that all the papers are

responses to what their authors perceive to be massive changes in the context of theological education, changes so great that they demand the reformulation of theology and hence theological education. . . . The shift that the papers record and respond to has numerous aspects. They include the erosion of earlier assumptions about authority and universality, a heightened awareness of pluralism and the historically determined character of experience, and a new sensitivity to the oppression and domination of some groups by others.³³

³⁰ Ibid., 123-125.

³¹ Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds., introduction to Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 9.

³² Ibid., 14.

³³ Ibid., 26.

In other words, the theologians contributing to Shifting Boundaries are explicitly concerned with the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and futures present in theological education today. These writers are also aware of the rapid pace of change and the ethical concerns for liberative strategies within theological schools. Because of the awareness of these issues and concerns and the fairly recent nature of this work, these theologians are potentially good dialogue partners to help understand the implications of this dissertation study. However, it is also clear that most of their concerns are focused on larger conceptual and philosophical, rather than applied, approaches to restructuring theological education.

In particular, several essays focus on how to clarify primary concepts, such as how a particular understanding of “theology” can serve as the unifying center for theological education. This approach includes chapters by Rebecca Chopp, Craig Dykstra, and Walter Wyman. Chopp focuses on how a three-part feminist critique can help “unmask” fundamental flaws based on “gender-bound presuppositions.”³⁴ Dykstra takes unpacking the concept of “practice” as his central theme.³⁵ Wyman argues for a more central position for “historical consciousness.”³⁶

Theologians Fiorenza, Knitter, and Paris focus on clarifying or intensifying a particular theme in theological education to offer new structure. However, these three professors each look to the university for the resources for the “reconstruction of

³⁴ Rebecca S. Chopp, “Situating the Structure: Prophetic Feminism and Theological Education,” in Shifting Boundaries, eds. Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 67-90.

³⁵ Craig Dykstra, “Reconceiving Practice,” in Shifting Boundaries, eds. Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 35-66.

³⁶ Walter E. Wyman, Jr., “The Historical Consciousness and the Study of Theology,” in Shifting Boundaries, eds. Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 91-119.

theological education.” Fiorenza focuses on the relationship between religious studies and theological education. Knitter focuses on the need to overcome “mono-religiosity,” and be in significant dialogue with other world religions. Paris focuses on the contributions of African Americans to theological education and the need to place “liberation and survival” at the center of the curriculum through greater dialogue with university arts and human sciences.³⁷ It is significant that each of these authors, in a different way, highlights the importance of a plurality of perspectives to provide adequate resources for contemporary theological education. Moreover, Peter Paris takes ethnic/racial diversity as his central focus, writing that “the purpose of this essay is to propose a possible solution to the problem of alienation that African American students continuously experience in predominantly white seminaries and divinity schools.”³⁸ Paris proposes a dialogical relationship between theological schools and universities to provide the broader learning resources, such as African American studies, health and education, and urban studies to effectively educate ministers to address a broad range of communities and real world problems. He effectively argues that this is necessary not only because theological schools do not, and cannot, offer all the perspectives needed, but also because the theological school “ethos” has been dominated by white, middle-class, free enterprise and a profit-motivated worldview. This is his vision for the future:

³⁷ Wheeler and Farley, 19-21.

³⁸ Peter J. Paris, “Overcoming Alienation in Theological Education,” in Shifting Boundaries, eds. Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 181.

the creation of a new ethos in theological education—an academic community of students and faculty concerned with the issues of suffering and oppressed peoples. . . . [Which] would enable both students and faculty to become aware of their many prejudices and other divisive attitudes bequeathed to them by their various sociocultural backgrounds. . . . In other words, a common ethos concerned with the relation of Christianity to the preservation of and quest for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. . . . [through diverse forms of ministry including both pastoral and prophetic traditions].³⁹

Because Paris is focused on issues of institutional structure that bring about a changed ethos through new, broader, deeper connections with university resources and perspectives, his essay does not offer specific suggestions for improving the ethos of a theological school internally. However, I am convinced by arguments by Paris, and others, that external structural changes are needed to bring about a thoroughgoing liberative ethos. This study seeks to offer resources to support this cultural shift internally through foundational structures and attitudes of pastoral care. I wholeheartedly share the vision of a “new ethos” for theological education clearly and intentionally focused on “threefold themes of the World Council of Churches – namely, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.”⁴⁰

The last four theologians in Shifting Boundaries, Ogletree, Cobb, Taylor, and Browning, also focus on “a theme or feature [and] also take on questions of structure directly, each in a very different way.”⁴¹ Ogletree and Cobb, in particular, argue against “creating a new pattern and order of fields of disciplines.” Ogletree focuses on how each discipline can be “theological” by being “structured internally by modes proper to theology.” Cobb writes against any focus on disciplines at all. He suggests, instead, a

³⁹ Ibid., 196-97.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁴¹ Wheeler and Farley, 21-22.

structure aimed at addressing the critical questions facing the church and world today. Browning proposes a complete pattern of studies as a response to the question of structure. He bases his reconfiguration of theology on the idea that liberal arts and sciences, including theology, are becoming more and more practical and historical and, hence, theological education should be restructured around an understanding of “fundamental practical theology.”⁴²

One essay in this final group is the most helpful for the purposes of this study because of its explicit focus on diversity in terms of understanding cross-cultural difference. Mark K. Taylor’s essay, “Celebrating Difference, Resisting Domination: The Need for Synchronic Strategies in Theological Education,” offers an approach that is helpful for creating a pastoral care foundation at a theological school. Taylor suggests a structure for theological education that begins with two very important assumptions: “the need to affirm and celebrate the plurality of cultural and religious differences, and . . . the need to resist various forms of political domination.”⁴³ Taylor develops an argument for how to address both cultural difference and political domination by utilizing the insights of cultural anthropology. His “proposal is that these two ‘synchronic’ strategies for navigating the complexities of our present (intercultural hermeneutic and cultural-political hermeneutic) be thoroughly integrated with the current ‘diachronic’ ones.”⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid. 21-24.

⁴³ Mark K. Taylor, “Celebrating Difference. Resisting Domination: The Need for Synchronic Strategies in Theological Education,” in *Shifting Boundaries*, eds. Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 260.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 288.

In summary, "diachronic" approaches are concerned with historical relationships, between the present and the past and, normatively, focus on faithfulness to the tradition and to something like contemporary human experience. According to Taylor, diachronic approaches have dominated theological education. "Synchronic" interactions focus on evaluation of boundaries within the present time, "horizons shaped by cultural identities and political patterns."⁴⁵ Normatively, synchronic evaluation seeks a breadth of interpretations and gives special weight to the positions of marginalized or oppressed persons' perspectives. Taylor's explicit attention, and central focus, on issues of cultural diversity makes his approach one with implications for understanding diversity at a theological school.

Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools

In 1997, Jackson Carroll, Barbara Wheeler, Daniel Aleshire, and Penny Marler authored a major work addressing the concerns facing Protestant theological education.⁴⁶ These authors devoted significant research time to a longitudinal study of two theological schools over three years, from 1989-1992. This study is ethnographic and qualitative in nature, so their data is very different from my one-time, one school, and one group quantitative survey. However, reading their reflections, which are presented in narrative journalistic fashion, and focusing on their analysis and conclusions. I was impressed with a number of important factors. Perhaps the most striking conclusion Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler reach is that "despite the salient differences, the structures of the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 263-64.

⁴⁶ Jackson W. Carroll et al., Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 204-21.

educational cultures of the two schools and the processes by which they accomplish their purposes are remarkably similar. *Structurally and functionally* (emphasis added), the two institutions are very much alike.”⁴⁷ For the purposes of their study, these researchers selected two theological schools from very different points on the spectrum of theological education. They call them Evangelical Seminary and Mainline Seminary to maintain anonymity while still indicating the general background of each institution. Since they did visit these institutions a few times a year over a three-year period, it is their summary comments about first-year students that are particularly helpful as a comparison for my study.

Another interesting outcome of this larger-scale comparative study is that the experiences of the students interviewed does not seem to break down into clear demographic categories, such as sex, race, denomination, or age. It appears, on a first reading, that Being There concludes that a student’s theological difference from the perceived sense of the institution’s theological stance may be a significant factor. These researchers also conclude that part-time students and those who are less involved in the extra-curricular life of the institution may also receive “less” of the overall impact of theological education or “formation.” After reading Being There, I am rethinking the impact of part-time enrollment, commuting significant distances, and taking courses offered at satellite locations. This is an area of theological education that needs more careful study and analysis.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 204.

Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler provide a helpful overview of “elements of educational culture.”⁴⁸ The first element they identify is each institution has a clearly stated “central message.” Secondly, at both theological schools there are “substantial variations on the themes of the dominant message.” The third element they identify in each context is the presence of a “student culture.” However, it is their final conclusion, the source of their book title, that “being there” is the key element to the theological school experience. By this I understand them to mean that the relationships and the learning that take place outside the traditional class times is critical at both a theologically conservative and a theologically liberal school.

Current Proposals: David H. Kelsey and Rebecca Chopp

David Kelsey has written two books important to this discussion of theological education: To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological About a Theological School and Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate. Kelsey’s description of the contemporary debate’s “internal movement and structure” in his book Between Athens and Berlin provides a particularly useful typology of two primary models of theological education that are sometimes at odds with each other.⁴⁹ These two contrasting types, as described by Kelsey, both influence theological education today. Understanding how each approach is expressed in the culture of a particular theological school helps describe the context of that institution, its students, faculty, and staff.

In To Understand God Truly, Kelsey elaborates a useful method for

⁴⁸ Carroll et al., Being There, 203.

⁴⁹ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 4.

understanding the concrete context of a particular theological school and the implications this context has for an understanding of how it does theological education. Kelsey provides a diagnosis of the problems facing theological education in this day and age in a similar way to how I came to address these issues. He notes the predictable process that new students go through in their first couple of years of “innocent idealization of theological education giv[ing] way before the concrete realities of the particular theological school whose ethos is the medium in which one now largely lives and whose polity constrains one’s life in powerful but often elusive ways.”⁵⁰ He describes some of the “grumbling” engaged in by students, faculty, and administrators related to the nature and purpose of theological education. Kelsey takes the concrete realities seriously by developing a tool for assessing a school’s situation that addresses issues of specific location in the geography of theological education.

Kelsey’s schema for a better understanding of a theological school’s situation based on “mapping” its location begins with four questions, three of which are primarily theological, one of which is not. The three theological questions are: “What construal or construals of the Christian thing are assumed in the way the subjects of study are addressed? What picture of what it is to understand God dominates the school’s common life? How does the school seem to understand itself as a community in relation to churches?”⁵¹ The “non-theological” question Kelsey identifies as primary has to do with what makes a theological school a school: “how shall that school go about schooling?” Put another way, what is the nature of “excellence” in education in this context? The

⁵⁰ Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

remainder of Kelsey's first book focused on theological education and sets forward a proposal of what an excellent theological school might look like, its course of study, and how to balance different understandings of excellence.

It is these two understandings of excellence in education that Kelsey calls "Athens" and "Berlin" that are the subject of his second book on theological education, Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate. Kelsey describes the larger conversation about theological education in recent times, primarily since the early 1980s. Kelsey briefly reviews earlier generations' debates. His focus is to describe the historical development of two distinct understandings of education and the implications of each of these foci for theological education. Kelsey begins by noting, as Wheeler did in her introduction to Shifting Boundaries, that the current unprecedented debate about theological education is remarkable, in part, because it is "theological." By this Kelsey means "the central question in the recent debate has been this: 'What is the nature and purpose of specifically theological education?'"⁵² Kelsey argues that it is important, not only for theological educators, but for the wider church public concerned about theological education, to understand the scope of the recent literature on the subject. He develops a typology to help describe the major positions in the debate and to clarify what is "at stake" from each perspective. "For historical reasons Christian theological education in North America is inescapably committed to two contrasting and finally irreconcilable types or models of what education at its best ought to be. . . . For one type I shall suggest that 'Athens' be the symbol, for the other 'Berlin.'"⁵³

⁵² Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Both models have implications for many aspects of theological education. These implications include the nature of students and faculty and the relationship between them, the goals of education and the course of study, and the type of community in which it should occur. This last question of the type of community may be the most helpful to understanding this study of first-year students at Claremont. Kelsey is clear to say at the beginning that the published perspectives he is reviewing are each forced by the history of theological education in the U.S. to address the priorities of both Athens and Berlin, at least to some degree.

Athens has been chosen to represent one perspective, since this model is based on the ancient Greek ideal of *paideia* as the center of any educational process. In the culture of ancient Greece, as described here by Kelsey, young free males were educated to prepare them to participate in public life. What was needed was “character formation.”⁵⁴ The Hellenistic culture of the early church assumed this same ideal of character formation or the culturing or cultivation of the soul which involved preparing the student in community to develop their own insight into the “knowledge of the Good itself.”⁵⁵ Christians understood this as the process of persons being converted to understand God in Jesus Christ and, hence, argued that “Christianity is *paideia*.”⁵⁶ While this Athens type of education changed over time, it remained influential, particularly in terms of education regarding theology.

⁵⁴ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

Berlin represents the second historical model due to the fact that Protestant theological education was dramatically influenced by the formation of the first modern university in Berlin, Germany in 1810. Theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher was appointed to the committee which sought to apply Enlightenment principles to the founding of a new understanding of education. “The overarching and organizing goal of the university was to be research and teaching students to do research; its goal was to be inquiry that aims to master the truth about whatever subject is studied.” This sort of research was to be “orderly, disciplined, and critical inquiry” (*Wissenschaft*)⁵⁷ without the assumption of authoritative traditions and texts that characterized *paideia*’s pursuit of truth. As described by Kelsey, Schleiermacher made the case for including theology in the new university system by appealing to an Enlightenment understanding of society needing well trained leaders in the areas of medicine, law, and theology. Schleiermacher, as interpreted here by Kelsey, argued that the study of theology, while not a “pure” science, could be studied as based on historical and cultural givens.

The implications for theological education for each of these ideal typologies are numerous. Of particular interest for this study is the role of community and the nature of the student. Kelsey concludes that “theological education of the ‘Athens’ type tends to focus on the student, on . . . the student undergo[ing] a deep kind of formation. . . . [It] is inherently communal. . . . Teachers and learners together constitute a community sharing the common goal of personally appropriating revealed wisdom.”⁵⁸ Kelsey goes on to argue that [in] the ‘Berlin’ model, theological education is a movement from data to

⁵⁷ Ibid. 13-14.

⁵⁸ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 20-21.

theory to application of theory to practice. . . . [T]he teacher is basically a researcher who needs the student to help achieve the goal of research in a cooperative enterprise. . . . What makes theological education of the ‘Berlin’ type theological is that it aims at preparing leaders . . . to help . . . communities nurture consciousness of God. . . . It is public in the sense of contributing to public welfare, the general good.⁵⁹

After this initial review of his Berlin and Athens typology, Kelsey spends a couple of chapters tracing the development of both the Berlin and Athens types in the United States historically. Around the middle of the book, Kelsey returns to the contemporary scene and describes another important duality he has identified within the current discussion about theological education: “There are two broad types of issues. It has been convenient, though misleading, to tag them as issues about *unity* and issues about *pluralism* in theological schools (emphasis added).”⁶⁰ Kelsey sees this duality as misleading because the issues are not actually mutually exclusive or opposite. He urges a careful description of what is meant by each of these terms when one applies them to theological education or a particular theological school. Kelsey proceeds to give examples from the current literature on theological education of a ‘Athens’ approach that is more focused on unity and one more focused on pluralism. And then, in the next chapter, ‘Berlin’ types with each of the two foci.

According to Kelsey, the “Athens” type addressing primarily issues of *unity* is represented by Edward Farley’s two works on theological education: Theologia and The

⁵⁹ Ibid., 22-25.

⁶⁰ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 95.

Fragility of Knowledge.⁶¹ The “Athens” type primarily addressing *pluralism* in the current debate is The Mud Flower Collective’s God’s Fierce Whimsy. While he sees Farley’s work as primarily focused on unity, Kelsey notes two areas of pluralism in Farley’s understanding of *habitus*: “a pluralism of settings for theological education . . . [and] the situation of believers as such, . . . believers’ race, gender, and ‘location’ socially, economically, culturally, and historically.”⁶²

In Kelsey’s summary of the Mud Flower Collective, he identifies “misplaced universalizing” as a major thesis of their work. He develops four implications for theological education based on the Collective’s work. First, “it takes place in a community inclusive ‘in its faculty and student body’ of ‘increasing numbers of women of different racial/ethnic groups as well as racial ethnic men.’”⁶³ Second, due to the fact that genuine inclusiveness also leads to difference in social, economic, and political power, the Mud Flower Collective identifies the “doing of justice” as the goal of theological education. The third implication from their work is that there is no single design for seminary curriculum; genuine inclusiveness and plurality require courses of study applicable to the “particular purposes, particular history, and present situation” of each school.⁶⁴ The final implication Kelsey lists has to do with the nature of *unity* in the Mud Flower Collective’s assessment. He notes that they describe genuine pluralism as

⁶¹ Edward Farley, The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶³ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 142-43, citing God’s Fierce Whimsy, 153.

⁶⁴ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 144.

“not only expect[ing] but invit[ing] tension and conflict. . .Tension rather than harmony is the sign of health in theological education in this view.”⁶⁵

Kelsey highlights a very important point here regarding the insights offered by the breakthrough work of the Mud Flower Collective. The unity valued and envisioned by this diverse group of women theologians not only presupposes pluralism, but understands tension and conflict as positive signs of health in a diverse environment. This is a very significant assertion given the prevalence, in my fifteen years experience of theological school communities, of both unspoken and spoken premiums placed on harmony and avoidance of tension and conflict. Changing the assumptions about conflict and tension, developing different understandings of these experiences, greater tolerance and ability to learn and grow through creative tension, ambiguity and conflict may be one of the key challenges for a diverse theological school.

Turning now to Kelsey’s examples of the ‘Berlin’ perspectives, one more focused on unity and one more on pluralism. He describes Hough and Cobb’s perspective, as articulated in Christian Identity and Theological Education, as more concerned with issues of unity. According the Kelsey, this perspective: “grounds the unity of education in its overarching goal of educating professional church leadership for the churches. . . leadership of those who share ‘Christian identity.’”⁶⁶ He finds it striking that Hough and Cobb do not depend on an “unhistorical structure” underlying Christian identity, but rather “the integrity of the historical and cultural concreteness of the lives of persons and

⁶⁵ Ibid., 145.

⁶⁶ Kelsey, Between Athens and Berlin, 170.

communities must be respected above all.”⁶⁷ Max Stackhouse’s Apologia is Kelsey’s example of a ‘Berlin’ perspective with a focus on pluralism. In contrast to the Mud Flower Collective, Kelsey states that Stackhouse argues that it is not a lack of incorporating pluralism, but, rather the way cultural and religious pluralism is included in theological schooling that is the problem. Kelsey summarizes this view of pluralism in the following way:

The heart of the issues is this: Theological education, in Stackhouse’s view, incorporates the relevant pluralism in a way that inescapably implies a systematic relativism about all questions of truth and justice regarding God; it implies that the “Christian thing” has no intrinsic unity or identity. . . The root of the fragmentation of theological education lies in the way it addresses issues of pluralism. . . Beneath all the pluralism of experience of God and of sociocultural locations of Christian living there must be at least a core that is transcontextual and that constitutes the authenticity of those various experiences as “Christian.”⁶⁸

The second theologian I reviewed who offers constructive material regarding theological education in the context of diversity is Rebecca Chopp in her book Saving Work. Chopp’s focus is on the contributions of feminism to theological education. Chopp takes as her goal describing “feminist practices” of theological education in her experience that have arisen out of the presence of women and the contributions of feminist critique. She uses the lenses of three specific feminist practices to examine theological education. Chopp develops the concepts “narrativity, ekklesiality (the feminist construction of church), and theology in feminist theological education”⁶⁹ to contain an intricate feminist analysis.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 170-73.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 175, 177. (Quotation marks in the original.)

⁶⁹ Chopp, Saving Work, xi.

The central thesis of this book is that feminist theology provides us resources to name, in our midst, the powerful reality of women and men transforming and being transformed in theological education through practices of narrativity, ekklesiality, and theology. Implicit in my thesis is that such feminist practices, along with other contemporary Christian movements in theological education, provide the material for the concrete realization of the basic ideas that the recent generation of writers on theological education have developed.⁷⁰

Before she begins her focus on these three feminist practices, Chopp provides a very helpful overview of the concrete context of theological education. Her first point is that the student bodies at theological schools have changed dramatically. She identifies the presence of women, blacks, and second-career students as primary examples of how “the subjects of theological education” have changed.⁷¹ Chopp's second point focuses on the changes in the “larger situation of U.S. culture.” She argues that pluralism must be viewed as a much larger “cultural phenomenon.”⁷² Her third area of contextual analysis applies specifically to her agenda as a theologian and her concern to focus on the process of making and understanding symbols as a concrete process. Chopp's analysis supports my foundational assessment that both theological education and the world in which it is located have changed dramatically over a fairly short period of time. While this may seem obvious and no one is exactly arguing that change has not occurred, a surprising number of theologians involved in the larger debate about the nature and purpose of theological education provide little or no analysis of the impact, meaning, or potential of these fundamental changes. For this reason I appreciate Rebecca Chopp's clear, concise acknowledgement and concern.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁷¹ Ibid., 12.

⁷² Ibid., 13.

After working through her focus on the feminist practices of narrativity, ekklesiality, and theology, Chopp summarizes in the following way her suggestions about how to rethink theological education:

I suggest we begin to redefine our way of thinking of 'theological education' in at least three significant ways. . . . First, theological education is about the relationships formed, the style of teaching, and the extracurricular activities as well as the curriculum. . . . Education may well be about 'what we do' as well as 'what we say.' . . . Indeed, the task for the subjects of theological education may be as much the doing of new forms of relationship to God, self, others, traditions, and society as the articulation of right ideas. . . . Second, theological education is formed in and through cultural problematics. . . such as the tremendous change in women's lives. . . global concerns and concerns of racism, multi-culturalism, and technology. . . Third, the symbolic patterns of religion and culture are inherently a part of theological education and need careful attention.⁷³

Rebecca Chopp's perspective as expressed in Saving Work has been a source of challenge and inspiration to do this study of first-year theological students. Her general assumptions and overall critique of some of the limitations of most of the writing in the theological education debate inspired a research approach that focused on Claremont utilizing contextual and concrete assessment. In agreement with Chopp, I also argue that the needed changes in theological education must go beyond curriculum and pedagogy. My study is primarily concerned with the students' experiences beyond the classroom and their sense of the larger environment in which their theological education occurs. I am also particularly interested in how emotional or subjective experiences contribute to the students' assessment of their overall experience.

The Conservative Critique of Liberal Theological Education

Requiem by Thomas Oden, published in 1995, provides a scathing indictment of mainline Protestant theological education. Oden paints a provocative picture of the

⁷³ Ibid., 111-12.

demise of both the “liberated” seminaries and churches. In their place, he promotes the resurgence of a “paleo-orthodox” Christianity that he argues is grounded in the “truth of the Christian faith as received ecumenically in its twenty centuries of experience, as textually defined in Scripture and ancient ecumenical tradition.”⁷⁴ Oden’s perspective in Requiem is difficult to understand and summarize, because the style of the book is inflammatory and condemns most of mainline Protestant theological education. Oden’s colorful use of language seems to caricature his targets and obscure the nature of his real concerns and contributions.

In the last decade the curriculum of seminaries has been liberated for sexually permissive advocacy, political activism, and ultrafeminist hype (as distinguished from believing feminist argument). The study of the Bible and church history becomes a deconstruction of patriarchal texts and traditions. The study of ethics becomes the study of political correctness. The study of liturgy becomes an experiment in color, balloons, poetry, and freedom. The study of pastoral care becomes a support group for the sexually alienated.⁷⁵

Fortunately there is a secondary source that has reviewed Oden’s concerns in a more constructive way. Donald Messer summarizes Oden’s argument in Calling Church and Seminary into the 21st Century. Messer helpfully identifies Oden’s six major concerns and criticisms of most theological schools:

First, contemporary seminaries are criticized for self-cloning look-alike faculties. . . . Second, theological schools are accused of being tradition-deprived. . . . Third, ‘the tenure principle,’ which was designed to protect academic freedom, has become so exploited as now to protect academic license, absenteeism, incompetence, and at times ‘moral turpitude.’ . . . Fourth, academic freedom in the seminaries has become an excuse for dodging criticism from the churches. . . . Fifth, theological schools recognize no theological or ethical boundaries. . . . Sixth, a disdain for evangelicals is everywhere evident in mainstream seminaries.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Thomas C. Oden, Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 25.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁶ Donald Messer, Calling Church and Seminary into the 21st Century (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) 38-51, citing Oden, Requiem, 37.

For my research, the importance of these criticisms is their reminder that issues of diversity and pluralism can be seen as extremely threatening to the cherished traditional understandings of the church and the world. More constructively, Oden's perspective points toward the importance of articulating values and boundaries along the way as theological schools change and include a broader variety of backgrounds and perspectives. It is important that an "anything goes" attitude not come to prevail because such a boundary-less environment does not provide a context for a healthy understanding of individuals, particular communities, or human interaction with God. In fact, I would argue that radical inclusiveness requires a much more conscious and intentional moral and ethical stance because an awareness of irreconcilable aspects of difference requires maturity and self-consciousness. It is true that one way to promote tolerance and diversity is to avoid all types of judgment and boundary setting and leave all real choices to individuals grounded in particular traditions and experience. However, Oden's challenge that theological schools must be in constructive relationships with churches is vital for the health of both institutions. Similarly, his call for various types of accountability, respect, and communication between faculty, students, staff, churches, and a breadth of traditions, including those who understand themselves as evangelical, is an essential part of a healthy supportive environment for diversity at a theological school. It is unfortunate that his communication style is not a good model for such vital respectful interaction.

In contrast to the tone and dramatic language used by Oden, the second self-identified conservative perspective I consulted was approachable and even-handed. John Leith's Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education focuses on the role of

faculty in both bringing about a “crisis” and future resolution. He sees the issues of graduate schools and universities and the preference for the Ph.D. degree for teaching as having eroded the faith commitment of faculty. This argument focuses on the reality that many Ph.D. candidates do not have a M.Div. educational background or the call to and experience of ministry in the larger church. However, this critique does not seem to take seriously the role that many faculty persons play in congregations as committed, educated, lay leadership. Moreover, he has a particular concern that faculty should have experience and demonstrated skills at leading and building local congregations. Leith understands local congregational ministry as the central and primary ministry of the church from which any and all other ministries develop and to which they are accountable. Leith’s understanding of diversity can be summarized in the statement: “[u]nity in Christ does not erase the stubborn facts of class, or culture, of gender, and or age that is embedded in the very physical constitution of human beings.”⁷⁷ While I agree that these factors are “stubborn” realities, I disagree with what seems to be a negative valuation of demographic diversity.

My experientially-based response to the changes in types of students attracted to theological education has been different than Leith’s. Rather than focus on how to attract more young white males to theological education, as Leith suggests and many others have suggested to me as an Admissions officer, the emphasis should be on how to equip those who experience a sense of call and choose to come to seminary to meet the challenges that they will face in ministry. I make this assertion because I have both a

⁷⁷ John H. Leith, Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 22.

personal and professional experience of God's active role in the motivation and dedication it takes to prepare and succeed at ministry. Some struggles and challenges will undoubtedly be due to being a woman, an older person, a person with physically limiting conditions, or a person of a different skin color than particular churches are inclined to choose. However, the quality of the ministry these persons can provide is not determined by these demographic descriptors, because the actual work of ministry is based in the ability to build relationships and communicate and help others communicate their most cherished beliefs, hope, fears, and vision for the future. This ability is embodied in particular persons and groups differently, but is not necessarily restricted by those differences. The primary restrictions are due to prejudices such as sexism and racism which, like all types of sin, should be repented and transformed rather than accepted. Leith's concerns that the churches need committed leadership and that faculties at seminaries need to deepen their dialogue and commitment with churches and denominations is an essential point. This renewal of relationship must be done in the context of a school designed to support and encourage diversity of theological tradition, racial/ethnic, and other types of significant difference because the experience of the creative power of diversity points toward fulfilling the scriptural call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Chapter 3

Study Design and Methodology

Noting the sweeping and dramatic demographic changes in the population that is seeking theological education, and the current debate regarding the need for changes in theological education, it is the purpose of my quantitative research project to focus on evaluating the significance of diversity in theological education. By taking a more in-depth look at a particular group of theological students, and interpreting the results utilizing insights drawn from pastoral care and counseling perspectives, I hope to increase our knowledge regarding the metamorphosis that has taken place in contemporary theological education. Specifically, this statistical analysis provides the data to ground my thesis that studying a specific group of theological students at a particular place and time will yield insights into the nature of theological education in the context of diversity.

Reviewing the quantitative studies of theological students done in the last ten years, I did not find any study that assessed whether a relationship might exist between particular aspects of diversity provided through descriptive statistics, such as age, sex, or race/ethnicity, and subjective student assessment of success or satisfaction. I wondered, based on anecdotal evidence gathered through my daily encounters as Admission Director with prospective and first-year students, if any predictive or determinative factors would show up in a small sample study. At the outset of this research I could argue both sides of the correlation possibility. I could see how either the identification of

specific predictive factors or the confirmation of the "null hypothesis"¹ could deepen the understanding of students' experience in a demographically diverse theological school. Either way, this survey seeks to provide a "voice" for aspects of first-year students' experience that I did not find articulated in previous studies of theological students or in the current debate about theological education.

Methodology

My survey responses come from fifty-five first-year seminary students and include descriptive demographic statistics including the following: sex, age group, cultural/ethnic group, relational status, denominational affiliation, and degree program. The short survey also included subjective questions about students' academic, emotional, and spiritual experience. Participants were also asked to select appropriate descriptors from lists of primary emotions they felt in their first year, the level of how well their expectations were met in various ways, and who they include in their primary emotional support network.

The purely descriptive results of this survey of first-year students, who entered 1996/1997, at Claremont School of Theology, are compared with national statistics for 1996/1997 from the Fact Book on Theological Education prepared annually by the Association of Theological Schools. This provides some sense of the richness of diversity at Claremont compared with what is found in theological education nationwide.

¹ The term "null hypothesis" is used in statistics to describe the starting assumption for any statistical analysis. It is assumed that no relationship existed between any factors in a study unless it can be proven through statistical equations and analysis to be above the level of random chance.

Many theological perspectives and, hence, the educational institutions founded for the education of leadership for faith communities, profess a holistic understanding of human beings, and such theological education communities are naturally made up of spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional components. Hence, it is easy to assume that theological schools understand diversity. Theological educators have been working for many years to help persons understand the impact of racial/ethnic difference, age or sex differences, and diversity in religious affiliation. However, I have discovered through experience in theological education that the tendency is to oversimplify toward benign cultural stereotypes and categorization. It remains very challenging, even in a progressive institution, to continue to learn and adjust to the ambiguity, interrelatedness, and limited nature of all descriptions of human beings. My experience as a pastoral counselor and an admissions administrator challenged me to understand these complex interrelated categories in a more open and flexible way. It is helpful to describe and quantify demographic descriptors, but it is also important to unpack and begin to reevaluate our assumptions, and our tendency to categorize persons based on demographic descriptors.

Ellis Larsen's extensive longitudinal study of contemporary seminarians closes with some interesting summary comments and challenges.²

² Larsen's study was based on a large stratified sample conducted at selected theological schools nationwide from 1986 through 1994.

In this profile of contemporary seminarians . . . it is clear that people of different ages, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and both genders are seeking a seminary education. The churches have yet to experience a full openness to all that these people bring to ministry. Seminaries also have much to do to cope with this variety. The variety in itself, however, is a gift to the seminaries and to the church. Society itself has difficulty in coping with variety. All these "red and yellow, black and white," women and men, old and young, are the children of God. Can the seminary and church show the way?³

Not only does Larsen highlight the diversity sweeping the world of theological education, but he also connects it to our societal demographic shifts and the changing nature of church leadership. It is significant that Larsen holds the seminary and the church together in the final sentence of the section quoted above. Working in admissions and recruitment, I often heard the church blame the seminary for not leading the way toward the biblical vision of a redeemed world, not providing the "right" candidates for ministry, or not addressing the issues most critical to the life of the church as seen "from the pews." However, I also heard faculty and administrators at seminaries and theological schools blame the church for not sending the "right" students, not setting the example of transformative leadership in communities and society, and not being willing to look at the larger social ills outside their buildings' doors. This mutual finger-pointing, which attempts to shift the responsibility for the conflicts raised by the changing "face" of theological education, does not seem creative or productive. As a person of faith, who has felt caught in the middle, I wonder how theological schools and churches might work together to educate, assess, and develop the leadership potential present in the very mixed student body that is present at most theological schools.

In both contrast and complement to Larsen's large-scale profile, my study was designed to collect both objective demographic information and subjective evaluations of

³ Larsen, 92.

experience from a small particular group of theological students at a specific time and place. The quantitative information provides a unique database that tells a piece of the story of theological student experience. This story provides information that will be evaluated using the tools of advanced statistical analysis, pastoral care and counseling, and pastoral theology. The primary goal of the survey research and evaluation is to understand this sample student population's experience better and to evaluate the role, or roles, demographic diversity plays in their experience. Once we understand this experience better, it becomes possible to elaborate a more adequate understanding of diversity and both the challenges and gifts it brings.

Design of the Survey

The survey design was influenced by multiple factors and disciplines, much as this research has been in general. Most questions were designed to be answered quickly due to a statistical research perspective that suggests an approachable, short, simple survey is more likely to get a strong return rate. Specifically, a significant number of the questions were set up as simple dichotomous or limited multiple-choice variable responses. Most of the basic demographic information, which provides the data to support my claim for the diversity of this group, was easily quantifiable. Even in areas that appear simple, there are layers of complexity. For instance, due to a commitment to a more just relationship between racial/ethnic groups, the survey encouraged respondents to “check all that apply” on the question “How do you describe yourself?” which is designed to collect racial/ethnic information. I discovered, through this design and wording, that some respondents chose options for the “other” (fill-in blank) that were a

surprise to me, such as: "Celtic-American" and "human being." This surprise provides a good reminder of the power of self-description in terms of racial/ethnic identity and commitment. As I seek to evaluate the "meaning" of these two particular write-in self-descriptions, I am reminded of how those of us who have seen ourselves as in the "dominant" or normative group react as that experience is challenged. I have noted in myself a sense of discovering ethnic roots I had not previously valued. I have also sometimes felt a sense of loss and the urge to connect with others as all part of the human species, rather than acknowledging the confusing and challenging nature of difference.

The survey instrument is a four-page questionnaire made up of thirty-three questions, included as Appendix A. It was designed to be completed in approximately ten minutes and require a minimum amount of reflection. Only two questions were entirely open-ended. Most questions provided a variety of response options and a blank to fill in for an "other" response, allowing for unforeseen and unforeseeable individual circumstances. The distribution of the surveys was to the entering classes of 1996/97, at the end of the academic year May 1997. A total of 105 surveys were distributed, one to each first-year student at the Claremont School of Theology. The results of the returned student surveys were processed by personal computer utilizing SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences). The surveys have been kept entirely anonymous to encourage a high response rate and complete candor from participants.

It is significant that fifty-five completed surveys were returned. This is a 52% return rate, a good level of response to insure statistical validity. This return rate was achieved by two reminder follow-ups to the primary survey: a postcard, and then a second survey with cover letter. A reminder notice was also included in the campus

Weekly Bulletin (put out by the Dean's Office at the Claremont School of Theology) in the weeks following the original survey distribution.

The survey includes a mix of demographic, objective questions, and more subjective experiential questions. Objective questions included those about degree program, denominational or religious affiliation, sex, prior vocation, primary professional objective, age, level of enrollment (units), outside employment and type of job. The more subjective questions include those asking students to rank themselves and CST on a political and theological spectrum from very liberal to very conservative. Respondents were also asked to check items on a list of concerns they may have faced during their first year which they considered "important," such as: academic demands, financial concerns, family concerns, physical and mental health, and other possible concerns. After this, respondents are asked to choose the three most rewarding aspects of their first-year experience.

The objective demographics questions also include the following: racial/ethnic self-description, relational circumstance, family size, and time needed for commute to school (if any). The subjective questions shift the concern to the student's support network and specific emotional support persons. The survey asks respondents to compare their actual experience with their expectations regarding academic load, student services, campus life, and overall demands. Toward the end of the survey is a set of questions asking for self-evaluations of academic success, the spiritual meaningfulness, emotional satisfaction, and overall satisfaction of their first year.

Many of the questions and underlying concerns expressed in the subjective questions in the survey are typical of a thorough pastoral care and counseling analysis. It

is foundational for a pastoral caregiver to evaluate a person's, couple's, or families' support system and the prominent emotions they are experiencing as well as the specific concern they might bring to a pastor or pastoral counselor. It is important to this project to solicit this information, because finding ways to support a diverse student body involves helping students build on their preexisting strengths as well as identify areas in need of new supports. Pastoral care and counseling perspectives tend to stress the importance of helping persons identify a variety of personal, relational, and community resources as well as addressing the dis-ease or crisis that may occasion persons to seek advice or counseling.

Another way this survey is clearly influenced by pastoral care and counseling perspectives is the intentional inclusion of questions about spiritual meaning, church connections, ordination processes, and related concerns. While these concerns are particularly relevant for this research population, questions of this type would be included by many pastoral caregivers in an initial assessment of any careseeker's situation. Pastoral care and counseling theories and methodologies have been intentionally developed to integrate the insights of "secular" psychology and sociology with theological assessments. They usually include an holistic understanding of persons, relationships, and communities as made up of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects--to name four primary aspects of human life.

The last page of the survey begins with a question assessing the effects of the year on self-esteem and then asks respondents to identify three prominent emotions associated with their experience. Respondents are also asked to think about what they would do differently or change about themselves, the institution, and their preparation for

beginning graduate theological education, as they look back over their first-year experience. As students completed the survey, they were asked two open-ended questions: “If you could change one aspect of yourself to improve your experience of your first year of graduate theological education what would it be?” The last question was: “If you could change one aspect of Claremont School of Theology to improve your experience of your first year of graduate theological education what would it be?”

On a separate page attached to the survey, respondents are asked to provide their name, address, and phone number if they were willing to be interviewed. It is interesting to speculate why half of those who returned the survey were also willing to be interviewed. Perhaps anonymity is not as important as I had assumed. Or, perhaps at the close of the survey these respondents felt their experience warranted further study and investigation. At the time of the initial design of this study it was not clear how much data could be reasonably gathered and analyzed within one project. While it became clear that the surveys provided enough primary data for this study, and the scope of this project would not include interviews, this researcher is convinced that further in-depth study of the experience of a diverse group of theological students would be interesting and valuable. Students have valuable insights into the dynamics of a theological school, the nature of ministerial preparation and formation across a variety of traditions, and the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of the educational programs and the community. As a group, they provide a sample of the wide variety of motivations, goals, and support systems theological students bring to theological education and utilize to survive and, hopefully, thrive along the way.

When I first began to process the survey results statistically and evaluate what could be learned from them, I became more aware, impressionistically, of how difficult it is to draw meaning from data that is primarily descriptive. This study "paints a picture" that, even though limited to one place, time, and group, is open to different interpretations. Perhaps what is most intriguing for any researcher or reader are the surprises, the places where one realizes that the answers to a particular question--or results of a specific statistical analysis--are not what one had expected or that it was not clear what one's expectation was until the moment of surprise.

In the case of this particular quantitative study, it is the subtlety of interpreting the small surprises that is at the heart of the results. This study did not find predictive or reliably determinative demographic factors associated with areas of self-assessed satisfaction or success. As I have worked to bridge statistical analysis and pastoral theological and care and counseling analysis, I have come to believe this subtlety and ambiguity are strengths of this study. This ambiguity corresponds accurately to my qualitative experience of being with persons as both an admissions counselor and as a pastoral counselor in a clinical setting. However, the ambiguity in the meaning of this study's results is also frustrating. As an administrator and educator, there are times when some, even limited, evidence of a specific way of improving theological education for an identifiable group of students is a very attractive idea. Consequently, this study, in both design and interpretation of its results, is influenced by both the yearning for certainty and specificity, and the pastoral understanding of the richness and ambiguity inherent in any significant study of human beings and human experience.

To recapitulate, the overall aim of the survey was to provide a reasonably short instrument by which first-year students could provide both demographic descriptors and a limited amount of frank subjective assessment of aspects of their first-year experience. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data, and some comparisons with much larger studies of seminary students to give a perspective on how this group compares with the national averages and descriptors. Inferential statistical methods provide an understanding of the relationship, if any, that exists between particular demographic descriptors and certain types of responses to the subjective questions.

Chapter 4

Survey Study Results and Statistical Inferences

To explicate my thesis that a specific quantitative study of a small sample of theological students can yield new insights into critical issues facing theological education in the context of diversity, I have asked the following basic research questions:

1. What is the demographic makeup of this sample of theological students and how does the diversity represented here compare with general Claremont School of Theology enrollment data as well as national statistics concerning theological students?
2. Are there statistical differences between groups, along lines of major demographic descriptors, such as sex, age, ethnic/racial background, or religious affiliation, that correlate with specific subjective experiences of first-year theological education?
3. Are there any predictive variables associated with the level of self-reported success, satisfaction, or meaning for this sample of theological students?

To begin to assess the nature of diversity in this group of first-year students, we start with an overview of the primary demographic descriptors. These descriptors include the following: degree programs represented, sex, age group, denominational or religious affiliation, cultural/ethnic self-description, family size, one-way commute time, previous profession, relational status, professional goal, level of enrollment, outside work level, and type of work. A copy of the survey instrument with frequencies for each response option of each question is included in the appendices.

Descriptive Statistics

Sex

As noted in the discussion of the Cornwall Collective's and the Mud Flower Collective's studies, the significant and growing presence of women was the first and remains, today, the single largest demographic shift in mainline Protestant theological education. The ATS Fact Book for academic year 1996-97 states that "women now constitute 33.9% of all enrollment (at member theological schools) up from 31.3% in 1992."¹ Table 1 provides the basic overview of the breakdown of female and male students in this study. While female students are the majority, they are not evenly distributed across degree programs or cultural/ethnic descriptors. A factor in understanding the interaction between different socio-cultural elements in this study is that international theological students at CTS tend to be male. In fact, there are only male international students in this study. It has been my experience that the majority of theological students from countries beyond the U.S. usually come from countries where women are not often considered for religious leadership or advanced education. Moreover, as you will note from Table 2, in this study group, the doctoral students who responded to the survey were also male.

¹ Jonathan Strom and Daniel Aleshire, eds., Fact Book on Theological Education, (Pittsburgh: Association of Theological Schools, 1997), 44.

Table 1**Sex of First-year Student Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	female	33	60.0
	male	22	40.0
Total		55	100.0

Table 2**Sex of First-year Respondents within Degree Programs**

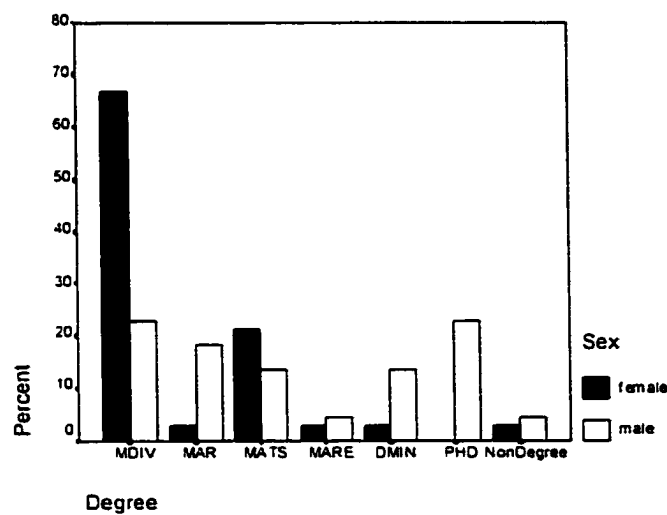
		Sex		Total
		Female	Male	
Degree	MDIV	22	5	27
	MAR	1	4	5
	MATS	7	3	10
	MARE	1	1	2
	DMIN	1	3	4
	PHD		5	5
	Non Degree	1	1	2
Total		33	22	55

Figure 1 further illustrates the distribution of women and men within each degree program and helps to clarify the major shift in M.Div. enrollment toward women. Women make up about 65% of the M.Div. enrollment and men the remaining 35%. The MARE degree (Master of Arts in Religious Education) is usually understood as a ministry-related degree that has been utilized for those preparing for non-ordained ministries that are historically predominately female. The figure also shows the more mixed situation in the degree programs focused toward academic careers (MAR, MATS, and Ph.D.). It is unclear why there were no female Ph.D. respondents in this study or why female respondents are a majority in the MATS degree and a minority in the MAR

program. The CST catalog for 1996-1998 indicates that approximately 50% of all students are women. It does not indicate the distribution within each degree program of women and men but, it does indicate that 60% of Caucasian students are women versus 18% of international students, 50% of Hispanic students, 39% of African American students, and 48% of Asian and Pacific Islander students.²

Figure 1

Distribution of Degree Program by Sex



Age

Respondents were asked to report their age by checking one of six age ranges. This survey reported that the most commonly checked box, as shown by both median and mode, was age range 36-45 years old. Because a specific age for each respondent was not requested, there is no way to calculate a mean average age. However the distribution gives a good overview of the age diversity. Figure 2 provides a picture of this diversity

² Claremont School of Theology. *Catalog, 1996-1998*. 82-3. (These percentages are approximations based on the number included in the demographic charts on these pages.)

and the breakdown by sex within each age group. As indicated in the introductory paragraph, a significant change in the makeup of the student body at many theological schools, including Claremont, is the shift toward second and third career students. Table 3 provides a view of the distribution in this population.

Figure 2

Age Distribution by Sex

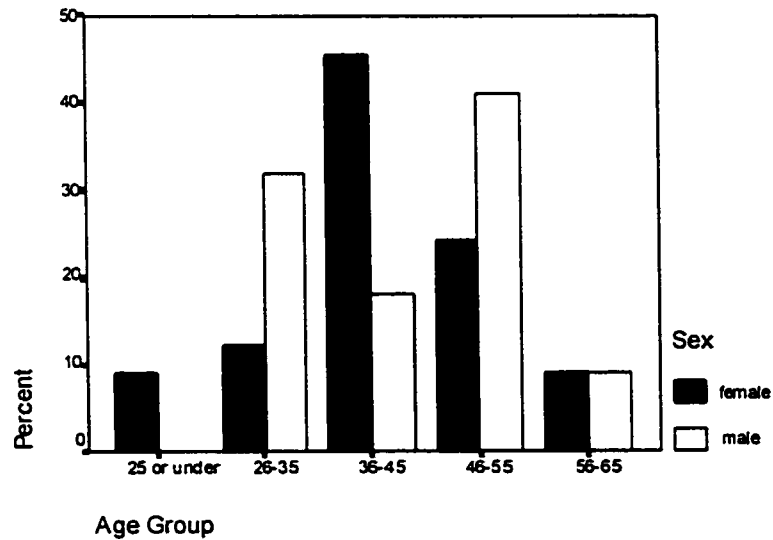


Table 3**Age Group Distribution in First-year Respondents**

Age Group		Frequency	Percent
Valid	25 or under	3	5.5
	26-35	11	20.0
	36-45	19	34.5
	46-55	17	30.9
	56-65	5	9.1
Total		55	100.0

It is interesting to note the breakdown of each age group by female and male. Figure 2 indicates that, at least for this sample, there are not many young men coming to theological education directly from college, at least within “traditional” age college graduates. However, as I review the results of this study, I wonder if it might not be more helpful to break the age group ranges at each decade. My experience is that persons in their twenties are basically “first career” even if they have been out of school five years, whereas persons in their thirties are more likely to have some substantial professional and/or parental life experience. Since the numbers of men and women are about the same if we combine the first two categories, it is possible that the concern voiced by some churches that younger men are not considering theological education and younger women are is not supported by this study. Moreover, the 36-45 years old group and the 46-55 years old group are also opposite when it comes to female/male demographics. One explanation may be that women who start families in their twenties are able to consider graduate school and outside vocational interests earlier than men who might prepare for a second career in the ministry or in teaching a decade later in their lives.

Another factor supporting the presence of women in the under 25 years of age group could be that they may be inspired to consider theological education earlier because they are a first or second generation of women ministers or academics, and theological education has some pioneering excitement for them. Many younger women I talked to have been inspired by the one woman professor in Religious Studies at their college or the only clergywoman they ever met. Conversely, religious leadership does seem to have lost its high social status in many communities, and younger men are less likely to consider ministry a socially prestigious career option. It can also be argued that, like the changes in teaching earlier in this decade, the ministry is being 'feminized' by the growing number of ordained women and this contributes to a lower social status in a still fundamentally patriarchal society.

Cultural/Ethnic Diversity

Table 4 provides an overview of the cultural, ethnic, and racial categories persons selected to describe themselves. The question encouraged them to “check all that apply” and provided a space for them to fill an “other” descriptor. The results of this study show that the category “Anglo/Euro-American” was selected by slightly more than 60%, including those who checked this category and another as well. Slightly less than 40% of this sample come from cultural, ethnic, or racial groups often described as “minority.” It is significant that the representation is this broad at a Protestant mainline graduate theological school. The significant presence of international students, primarily from Korea, contributes to this breadth of diversity.

Table 4**Cultural/Ethnic Diversity**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1. African American/Black	5	9.3
	2. Celtic American	1	1.9
	3. Anglo/Euro-American	33	61.1
	4. Asian American	5	9.3
	5. International Student	5	9.3
	6. Hispanic American/Latino/Chicano	3	5.6
	7. Anglo & Native American	1	1.9
	8. Black & Anglo	1	1.9
	Total	54	100.0
Missing		1	
Total		55	

Table 5**Cultural/Ethnic Diversity within Degree and Sex Groupings**

Sex			African Am./Black	Celtic Am.	Anglo/Euro-Am.	Asian Am.	International Student	Hispanic Am./Latino/Chicano	Anglo & Native Am	Black & Anglo	Total
Female	Degree	MDIV	1	1	15	1		2		1	21
		MAR			1						1
		MATS			6			1			7
		MARE				1					1
		DMIN				1					1
		Non-Degree			1						1
		Total	1	1	23	3		3		1	32
Male	Degree	MDIV			3		2				5
		MAR	2		2						4
		MATS			2				1		3
		MARE					1				1
		DMIN	1		1		1				3
		PHD	1		1	2	1				5
		Non-Degree			1						1
		Total	4		10	2	5		1		22

It is also interesting to note how ethnic or cultural diversity overlap with sex and degree program. Table 5 illustrates that nine women respondents, approximately 25%, are non-Anglo/Euro-American, whereas the statistics on male respondents indicated that 12 persons, approximately 50%, are non-Anglo/Euro-American, which illustrates the influence of the international students. These numbers support the argument that this sample is significantly demographically diverse.

In the overall head count enrollment for Fall 1996 reported by the ATS Fact Book, women make up slightly more than one-third of students; combining all non-White groups together including "race unknown," the ATS report indicates that a similar

percentage, about 34% of women are non-White. In the ATS statistics, two-thirds of all students are men; among those, one-third are non-White persons and 9% are international “non resident alien” students.³

Table 6 provides further detail illustrating how cultural/ethnic diversity and male female difference are present in religious difference. Because the Claremont School of Theology is a seminary for the United Methodist Church they make up the largest single group, by far, but not a majority. To illustrate the overlap between three descriptors for this table, religious affiliation has been made a dichotomous variable--UMC or non-UMC affiliation.

³ Strom and Aleshire, 40-1. (Comparison percentages computed from the head-count numbers on these pages.)

Table 6**Cultural/Ethnic Representation by Sex within UMC Affiliation****Cultural/Ethnic Group * UMC vs. non-UMC * Sex Crosstabulation**

Count

Sex			UMC vs. non-UMC		Total
			umc	non-umc	
female	Cultural/Ethnic Group	African Am./Black		1	1
		Celtic Am.		1	1
		Anglo/Euro-Am.	7	15	22
		Asian Am.	2	1	3
		Hispanic Am./Latino/Chicano	2	1	3
		Black & Anglo		1	1
	Total		11	20	31
male	Cultural/Ethnic Group	African Am./Black	2	2	4
		Anglo/Euro-Am.	5	5	10
		Asian Am.	1	1	2
		International Student	3	2	5
		Anglo & Native Am		1	1
	Total		11	11	22

Degree Programs

Table 7 provides an overview of the degree programs in which students who responded to this survey are enrolled. The number of degree programs represented in this sample and at CST in general is a significant type of diversity because of the variety of career and vocational goals towards which these degrees point. Although there is no absolute delineation between the coursework designed for the Masters in Divinity (M.Div.) and that for the Master of Arts in Theology (MATS), there is usually a difference in the students who choose to enroll in particular courses. Moreover, the doctoral programs add another level of complexity to understanding the needs, background, and resources of this particular group of students.

Table 7

Degree Programs of First-year Student Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	MDIV	27	49.1
	MAR	5	9.1
	MATS	10	18.2
	MARE	2	3.6
	DMIN	4	7.3
	PHD	5	9.1
	Non-Degree	2	3.6
Total		55	100.0

Table 8**Degree Program Frequency within Cultural/Ethnic Groups**

		African Am./Black	Celtic Am.	Anglo/Euro-Am.	Asian Am.	International Student	Hispanic Am./Latino/Chicano	Anglo & Native Am	Black & Anglo	Total
Degree	MDIV	1	1	18	1	2	2		1	26
	MAR	2		3						5
	MATS			8			1	1		10
	MARE				1	1				2
	DMIN	1		1	1	1				4
	PHD	1		1	2	1				5
	Non-Degree			2						2
Total		5	1	33	5	5	3	1	1	54

As is evident from Table 8, the Ph.D. program is unusually well-represented in this sample. This may be due at least in part to the fact that the 1996/1997 entering class was the year that the Ph.D. program in Bible and Theology was launched and an unusually large number of students were admitted, consequently, to provide a critical mass for this new area. This program's focus on combining biblical studies and theology at the doctoral level was also very attractive to international students. In general, the cultural/ethnic distribution in both the Ph.D. and the D.Min. is very broad with no dominant group in either program.

Table 9 provides a summary comparison of respondents who are Master of Divinity students and those in all other programs combined.

Table 9**Summary of Master of Divinity versus All Other Degrees**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	non-M.Div	27	49.1
	M.Div	28	50.9
	Total	55	100.0
Total		55	100.0

This dichotomous comparison is important because the M.Div. degree is the standard professional degree for preparation for the ordained ministry and central to the mission of a school such as the Claremont School of Theology which was founded, is affiliated with, and is supported financially by a mainline denominational tradition. It is my impression, reviewing the make-up of a variety of theological schools, that maintaining both a strong M.Div. program and strong representation in a variety of other degree programs is vital to attracting a talented and diverse student body. However, this is a type of diversity that makes the argument for, and implementation of, a foundational level of pastoral care more difficult. Because approximately 50% of Claremont's students are not necessarily oriented toward a ministerial degree, it can be argued that 50% of the students are studying various foci within theology as academic disciplines, much the same way as any student attends graduate school to study in any discipline.

However, there are two responses to that argument, which help to clarify my understanding of what is at stake. First, let us assume it is true that 50% of CST students view their education as simply graduate school. Although it is beyond the scope of this research, I believe that a concern for multicultural perspectives, respect across

differences, and emotional supports are concerns for graduate programs with diverse student populations throughout the country. In fact, due to their location in major universities, many graduate programs offer a broad range of support services and have staff persons dedicated to multicultural concerns and community life issues. A second response, taking a different tack, is that while the student body is approximately 50%/50% M.Div. versus non- M.Div. the non-M.Div. programs do include persons who consider their studies related to a sense of spirituality or religious belief. This is regardless of vocation objective, and it can also be argued that most persons have some deeply held religious beliefs, and it is unlikely that they would study in the area of theology without some primary systems of meaning making being engaged and sometimes challenged. The question of degree program enrollment is related to the questions of motivation, vocational goal, and religious affiliation or tradition, as well as other both personal and interpersonal interrelated concerns.

I have included a simple summary of how respondents answered the question of whether or not ordained parish ministry is a “primary professional objective” in Table 10. Providing education for persons with an interest in, and the gifts for, parish ministry is usually considered one, if not *the*, primary responsibility of a theological school, particularly a school like CST which is an official seminary of the United Methodist Church. However, an interest in the ordained ministry is clearly only one of the motivations that brings persons to theological education. Moreover, although this interest is also usually furthered by pursuit of the M.Div. degree, some persons are interested in a broader definition of ministry, and/or belong to faith communities that do not require such education for ordination. Some faith communities do not allow ordination,

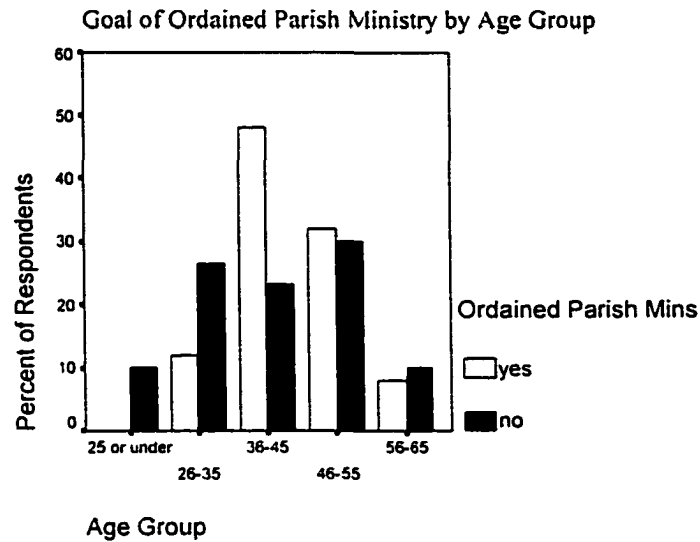
regardless of degree, as in the case of Roman Catholic women and homosexual persons who are open about their self- understanding.

Table 10

Interest in Ordained Parish Ministry

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	yes	25	45.5
	no	30	54.5
	Total	55	100.0
Total		55	100.0

Figure 3 further illustrates how the vocational goal of ordained parish ministry breaks down for specific age groups. The age group 36-45 years old has the strongest preference for considering parish ministry. This is the age group Admissions administrators tend to see as second career and, possibly, spawning a stereotype of mid-life change involving a reevaluation and 'crisis' leading to a change of primary vocation. However, this is also the age group that includes women, and some men, who have worked primarily in the home, raising young children, and in their mid-thirties to mid-forties feel freer to explore other options they may have put on hold since early adulthood.

Figure 3**Goal of Ordained Ministry by Age Group**

The degree program data from this study compares with the data from ATS Fact Book (1996-97) in some interesting ways. First, since different theological schools offer different degrees, ATS groups degrees into categories. It is most helpful to compare this survey data to the percentages computed from the "Head Count Enrollment in Protestant Denominational and Inter/Nondenominational Schools."⁴

⁴ Strom and Aleshire, 28. (Comparison percentages computed from the head-count numbers provided on this page.)

Table 11**Degree Program Comparison with ATS Enrollment**

		Frequency	Percent	ATS Degree Groups(a)	Percent(b)
Valid	MDIV	27	49.1	M.Div	41.0
	MAR	5	9.1	Gen. Theo. (MAR and MATS)	10.0
	MATS	10	18.2		
	MARE	2	3.6	Ministry/ non-MDIV	11.0
	DMIN	4	7.3	Advanced Ministerial	13.0
	PHD	5	9.1	Advanced Research	8.0
	Non Degree	2	3.6	Other	17.0
Total		55	100.0		100.0
a. The Association of Theological Schools approves degree programs in five categories, which I have summarized here. A full list is available in the ATS Fact Book 1996-97, p. viii.					
b. The statistics provided by ATS are "Head Count Enrollment in Protestant Denominational and Inter/Nondenominational Schools" from which I computed percentages for the purposes of comparison to this study.					

As you can see from Table 11, the Claremont Theological School (CST) sample has a high percentage of M.Div. (49.1 % vs. 41% in ATS) and in the General Theology degrees, (which combines MAR and MATS) with CST at 27.3% compared to the ATS percentage of 10%. CST also has a higher percentage of students in the Ph.D. program 9.1% versus the ATS 8%. It is also interesting to note that CST, consequently, has lower percentages in the "Ministry/non-M.Div." degree category, the "Advanced Ministerial" degree category, and the "other" degree category.

Denomination or Religious Affiliation

The next set of statistics deals with respondent's denomination or religious affiliation. Table 12 illustrates the diversity in this area showing percentages of first-year student respondents affiliated with thirteen different religious traditions, including one

person with “no affiliation,” and one person who chose to leave this question blank.

What is important to note for later analysis is that slightly more than 40% of this sample indicated an affiliation with the United Methodist Church. The remaining almost 60% of respondents indicated some other choice. Other tables and figures compare “UMC and non-UMC” to highlight these two major groups.

Table 12

Denominational Affiliation of First-year Respondents

Denominational Affiliation		Frequency	Valid Percent
	Methodist	22	40.7
	UFMCC(b)	1	1.9
	Religious Science	1	1.9
	Disciples of Christ	2	3.7
	Baptist	1	1.9
	No Affiliation(a)	3	5.6
	Episcopal	9	16.7
	Lutheran	1	1.9
	Unitarian Universalist	4	7.4
	Roman Catholic	3	5.6
	Presbyterian	3	5.6
	UCC(c)	2	3.7
	AME(d)	1	1.9
	Church of God in Christ	1	1.9
	Total	54	100.0
	Missing	1	
Total		55	
a. Indicates no particular religious affiliation.			
b. United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches			
c. United Church of Christ			
d. African Methodist Episcopal			

It is significant that, while the Claremont School of Theology is an official seminary of the United Methodist Church, its students come from a wide variety of religious affiliations. Two factors are important contributors to this phenomenon. First, CST's location in the Los Angeles basin provides a large, religiously diverse population

base of particularly second-career students who may be less interested or, practically, less able to relocate to a theological school affiliated with their own tradition. Secondly, CST's reputation for academic excellence, and Ph.D. programs, in particular, attract students across denominational and religious lines. The unusually high number of Ph.D. students in this sample has also contributed to the "non-UMC" group numbers.

Figure 4 below helps to illustrate both the substantial, though not majority, United Methodist presence in the sample and the breadth of traditions represented in a group of only fifty-five persons out of a student body of around three hundred.

Figure 4

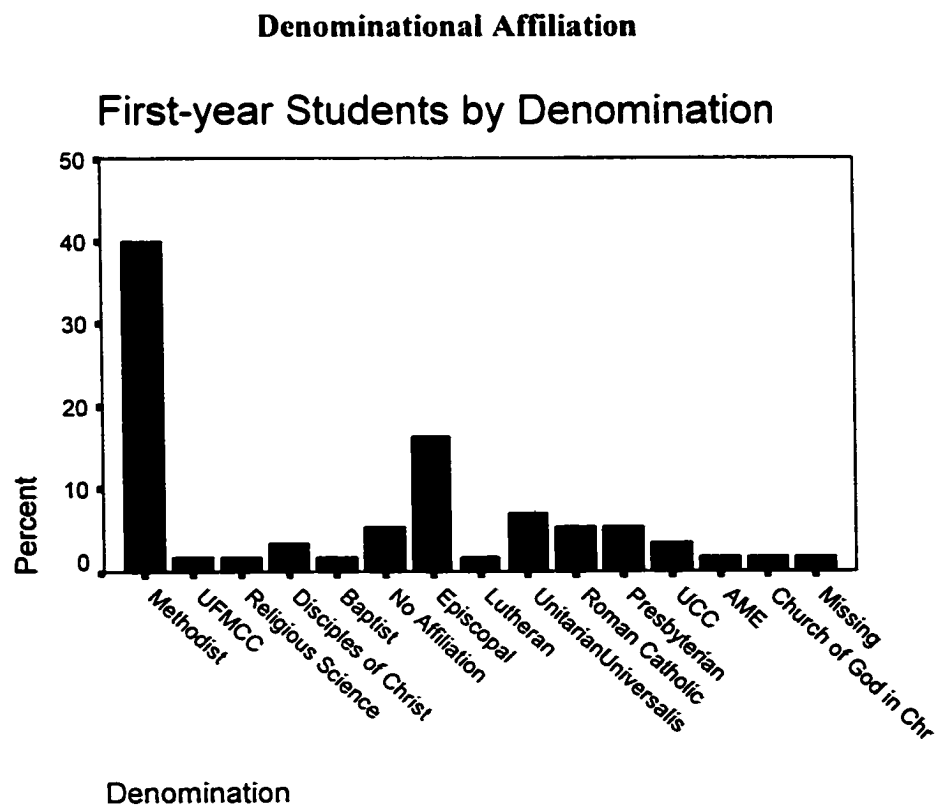


Table 13 and Figure 5 further illustrate the variety and diversity within the religious affiliation category--even with approximately 50% UMC students.

Table 13

Comparison of United Methodist Affiliation with All Others Combined

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	UMC	22	40.7
	non-UMC	32	59.3
	Missing	1	
Total		55	100.0

Figure 5

United Methodist Affiliation versus Non-UMC

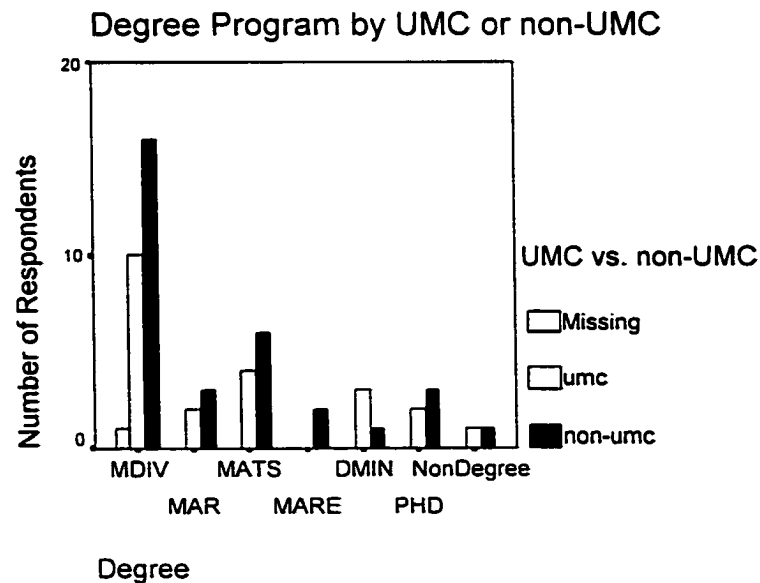


Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the Anglo/Euro-American representation as compared with those who did not check "Anglo/Euro-American." It is interesting to note the racial/ethnic diversity across the denominational distribution.

Figure 6

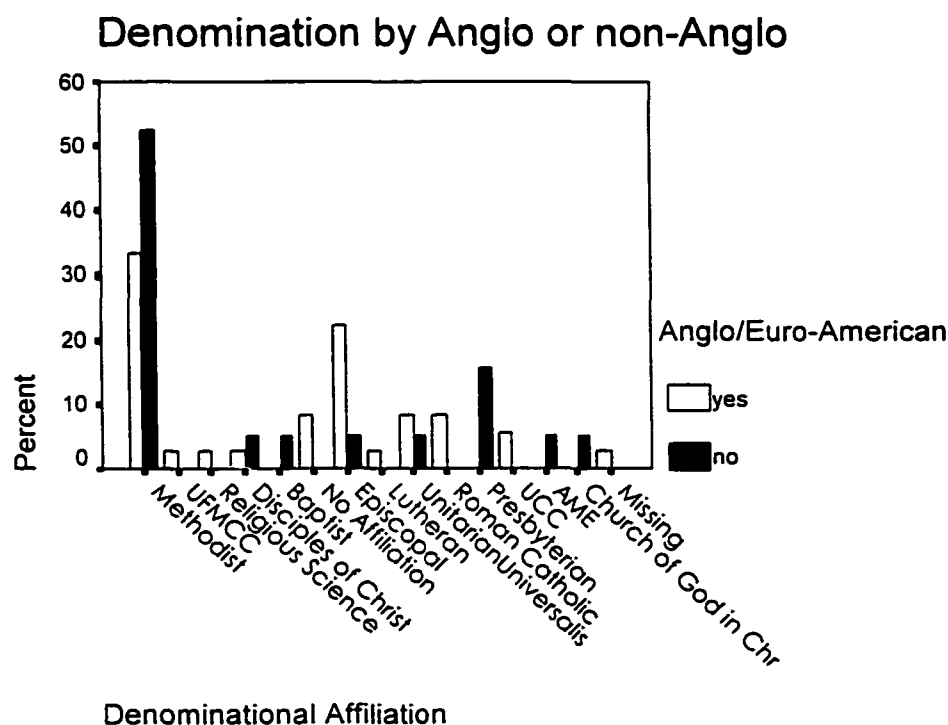
Anglo/Euro-American versus non-Anglo across Denominational Distribution**Life Experience Prior to Theological School**

Table 14 illustrates the range of life experience, as described by a person's previous profession, found in this sample of first-year students. According to the responses to this question, almost 15% consider their "previous profession" to be "full-time student." This group is likely to be a combination of "Age Group 25 and under" and Ph.D. students or second-career/parent homemakers who had returned to college to finish their bachelors degree to allow them to apply to graduate theological school.

The most common previous profession identified is "business," selected by 25.5% of the respondents. It would be interesting to know how the broader U.S. job market

breaks down in terms of types of employment to assess whether theological students are generally representative or more likely to come from a specific sector of the employment market.

The category "other" was selected by 14.5% of the respondents; they included the following descriptions: self-employed (cleaning service), civil engineer, public telecommunications, counselor (*two* respondents), clerk, lawyer, and airline captain. One impression is that counselors did *not* select the category "social services." Another impression is, again, the diversity of experience represented in even a small sample of theological students.

Table 14

Distribution of Previous Professions

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Parent/homemaker	6	10.9
	Full-time student	8	14.5
	Professional minister	6	10.9
	Social services	2	3.6
	Educator	7	12.7
	Business	14	25.5
	Religious education	4	7.3
	Other	8	14.5
	Total	55	100.0

Relational Status and Family Size and Age of Dependents

The next type of descriptive diversity addressed in this study is that of students' "relational status." Rather than using the traditional term "marital status," I have asked about "relationship." It is my hope this provides a broader and more inclusive set of

categories, which may more accurately reflect the diversity of types of families represented in the student body.

Table 15

Distribution of Relational Status for Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single never married	14	25.5
	Married	31	56.4
	Divorced	7	12.7
	Widowed	1	1.8
	Separated	2	3.6
Total		55	100.0

It is important as a part of deepening the understanding of the nature of a diverse student body at the graduate level, to be aware of the variety of family situations, even if only in terms of size and relational status represented by this group of students. Clearly, each family will have its own way of both supporting and distracting the student from their theological education process. However, issues of family size, number of dependents, age of dependents, length of time spent in commuting, and number of units enrolled all help to flesh out the lives of these first-year student respondents. There are no comparable statistics collected by ATS, except to note the growing importance of the ratio of head count enrollment to FTE (full-time equivalent). FTE compared to head count is becoming a very important set of numbers for comparing one institution to another in terms of faculty and other essential resources for evaluation in the accreditation process.

Table 16**Family Size**

Number of family members		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1.00	14	26.4
	2.00	9	17.0
	3.00	12	22.6
	4.00	13	24.5
	5.00	3	5.7
	6.00	2	3.8
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

There is a structural weakness in the survey in the area of number and type of dependents. The question was not designed to cover more than one age group. So, for example, a student with a child of five years old and a dependent adult living in her or his family (such as that child's grandparent), or children in more than one age group, was counted in only one group. The respondent had to choose one answer rather than the option of marking "all that apply." Moreover, because the questions here focus on the number and age of dependents, they do not even begin to assess *whom* a student includes in their definition of "family." The question on the survey asks for the "number of persons living together or financially dependent." To improve future research projects, more creative and focused thought needs to be devoted to developing simple questions that help provide information about the variety of family structures and support systems theological students come from and return to--usually on a daily basis.

Table 17**Age of Dependents**

Age Groups		Frequency	Percent
Valid	none	28	50.9
	age 0-5	4	7.3
	age 6-12	10	18.2
	age 13<	12	21.8
	dep. adult/s	1	1.8
Total		55	100.0

Other Time Commitments

The next type of descriptive data gathered by this survey involves other ways of assessing time commitments and/or time invested in theological education by this group of theological students. Commute time is one measure of both how much time a student has for her or his studies and the dedication to engage in this study despite geographical obstacles. Level of enrollment provides a different type of gauge for how much time each respondent has chosen or been able to devote to theological education at this time. Enrollment level also gets at the important educational and community-building challenge of connecting with, being responsive to, and effectively educating a significant part-time adult student body. This statistic relates to the growing importance within the Association of Theological School for the "head-count" enrollment compared to the "full-time equivalent" (FTE) enrollment and how this changing statistic effects educational resource needs, effectiveness, recruitment, and many other aspects of a theological school's strategic planning.

Table 18

Time Required for One-way Commute

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Less than 30 min.	7	13.0
	30 - 60 min.	16	29.6
	60+ min.	21	38.9
	No commute	10	18.5
	Total	54	100.0
Missing		1	
Total		55	

By combining "no commute" with "less than 30 minutes" categories from Table 18, we can see that approximately 30% of respondents have no commute to school or less than 30 minutes, a second group of approximately 30% commute 30 - 60 minutes each way. The third group, almost 40%, commutes over an hour each way. This is significant because it indicates that the truly "local" community for this sample of theological students is only about one-third of the student body. Because this statistic is not collected by the Registrar's Office or by ATS it is not possible to know how representative this group is. However, if they are representative, it is clear that a foundational level of pastoral care or activities aimed at promoting a sense of community *must* include a concern for commuters and their schedule. However, it has been my experience that on-campus students can also feel "neglected" because their participation can be taken for granted. It is important to be consciously invitational to both of these primary categories.

Table 19**Level of Enrollment**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	3-6 units	16	29.1
	7-11 units	15	27.3
	12 units or more	24	43.6
Total		55	100.0

Comparing commute times to the enrollment levels, we find that approximately 30% take only one or two classes (3-6 units), less than 30 % are enrolled around half time (7-11 units), and over 43% are full-time students (12 or more units). This indicates that some students with a significant commute time still enroll at full-time levels. This also seems to indicate that the “commuter schedule” CST has worked to develop over the last 8 years has probably contributed to maintaining and achieving good levels of enrollment and FTE.

Another area of concern for students is their work commitments outside of their studies. This sample represents a range of experience in this area as well. The survey asked them to indicate the average number of hours worked per week and the nature of that work. These statistics confirm what most faculty members and staff at Claremont already know: students have heavy outside work responsibilities.

Table 20**Hours worked per Week at a Paying Job**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	none	15	27.3
	1-10 hours	8	14.5
	11-20 hours	14	25.5
	21 or more hours	18	32.7
Total		55	100.0

Less than a third (27.3%) of student respondents have *no* outside work and almost a third (32.7%) work at least half-time (21 or more hours a week). Anecdotally, my sense is that second-career, mid-life, students are managing school, work, family, and church responsibilities, and this definitely limits their options for participation in the non-classroom aspects of theological education and community life. Family obligations, economic responsibilities, and ethnic/cultural background all impact, and at times limit, the "luxury" of full engagement in theological study. Ethnic/cultural and religious affiliation also tend to determine the level of time and energy expected from a theological student by their church community. However, it is difficult to assess the effect of some of these factors because the same ties that require attention from the student are often sources of support--emotionally, spiritually, and financially.

The question concerning the "nature of current paying job" helps to provide some sense of the level of responsibility required and any connection to their current theological schooling. However, given the response options on this question it is difficult to reach any conclusions. It is possible that both "previous career" and "future

professional goal" relate to theological education or ministry. On that assumption, this sample of theological students could have over 50% engaged in some form of ministry as paid work while they are in their first year of theological school. Of course this includes the doctoral students (approximately 15%, nine respondents in either Ph.D. or D. Min.), who would definitely have previous theological training and are likely to be ordained and have ministry experience.

Table 21

Nature of Current Paying Job

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	previous career	15	27.3
	future prof.goal	13	23.6
	campus work study	4	7.3
	other ministry	1	1.8
	self employed	1	1.8
	purely financial	6	10.9
	not working	15	27.3
Total		55	100.0

Liberal versus Conservative Descriptors

The distributions of respondents' ratings of themselves on a scale of conservative to liberal, both theologically and politically, are the focus of the last set of descriptive statistical tables. The terms "liberal" and "conservative" are not defined in the survey. These terms are simply laid out on a five-option spectrum: very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, and very liberal. It is a reasonable critique of this study to say that what one person sees as "liberal" or "conservative" might be *very* different from another person. However, the original intent of these questions was to be subjective

and to encourage a student to self-define and describe. These impressionistic categories were then evaluated to see if they correlate or are predictive of that student's sense of satisfaction or success. One hypothesis was that students who saw themselves as a "match" to the institution on their liberal to conservative scale might be more satisfied or successful.

Table 22

Theological Self-Perceptions

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	very liberal	13	24.5
	liberal	16	30.2
	moderate	13	24.5
	conservative	10	18.9
	very conservative	1	1.9
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

Table 23

Political Self-Perceptions

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Very liberal	10	18.5
	liberal	17	31.5
	moderate	21	38.9
	conservative	6	11.1
	Total	54	100.0
Missing		1	
Total		55	

It is interesting to note that significantly more respondents describe themselves as theologically liberal or very liberal than politically liberal or very liberal. However, more

persons selected theologically conservative than politically conservative. Also, all but one survey respondent completed this question whereas seven persons skipped these questions when they were asked about CST. This statistic supports my sense that the student body of the Claremont School of Theology is fairly theologically diverse, based on different religious affiliations and ethnic cultural factors, perhaps. However, the range of political diversity is less. Perhaps the issues that are usually understood to define the political spectrum are more divisive. I have also heard students talk about the need to understand a range of theological perspectives because of the variety they find even within their own church traditions and certainly if they seek to minister ecumenically or in non-traditional social justice or community service contexts.

Table 24

Perceptions of CST's Theological Position

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	very liberal	15	31.3
	liberal	27	56.3
	moderate	5	10.4
	conservative	1	2.1
	Total	48	100.0
Missing		7	
Total		55	

Table 25**Perceptions of CST's Political Position**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	very liberal	16	33.3
	liberal	21	43.8
	moderate	11	22.9
	Total	48	100.0
Missing		7	
Total		55	

Although a significant number of persons did not answer these two questions (seven--over 10%) the same general pattern applies here as to the self-descriptive questions above. CST is perceived as more, or very, liberal theologically. Politically, more persons chose the description of "moderate." Comparing the numbers between the self-descriptions and CST descriptions, twenty-nine persons described themselves as liberal or very liberal theologically; forty-two respondents check these categories to describe CST. Politically, twenty-seven persons described themselves as liberal or very liberal, versus thirty-seven selecting these categories to describe the school.

Impact of First-year Experience

I asked first-year students about the effect of theological education on their self-esteem as one measure of how dramatically or deeply influenced persons are during this transitional period. If disillusionment and dissatisfaction were the dominant experience, I would expect to find respondents checking the box "detrimental" to describe the effect on their self-esteem. It is still possible that the approximately 45% of the first-year students

who did *not* send their survey more were dissatisfied, judged themselves as unsuccessful, and felt there was a negative effect on their self-esteem. However, because the survey was constructed to provide opportunities to express anger and criticism and because the responses were anonymous, I believe those who responded are reasonably representative. As a pastoral counselor I am inclined to hypothesize that those who didn't respond are more likely to be apathetic or feel unaffected by the experience. Strong feelings, either positive or negative, are more likely to lead to a response.

As Table 26 shows, under half of the respondents (44%) indicated that there was no change in their self-esteem due to their first year of theological education. Over half (53.7%) indicated their self-esteem was improved or much improved. These numbers underscore the generally positive response this survey found toward the first-year experience. This is in spite of some indications that the experience was stressful and challenging and, as the next set of statistics indicates, *not* necessarily a match with what persons expected.

Table 26

Change in Self-Esteem in the First Year

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Detrimental	1	1.9
	No change	24	44.4
	Improved	24	44.4
	Much improved	5	9.3
	Total	54	100.0
Missing		1	
Total		55	

Beginning with Table 27, we see how respondents rated their actual experience as compared to their expectations. These expectations-versus-experience questions were divided up to focus first on three different aspects of the theological school and then on a final overall ranking. These questions were included in the design because it seems possible, and is often suggested by faculty and administrators at theological schools, that one of the challenges new students face in the beginning is the realization that they had unrealistic expectations. I have heard it said that people come to seminary or to a theological school thinking that it will be a "spiritual community," and they find out that it's a graduate school. I have heard first-year students say they expected people to be "nicer." Given these sometimes mostly unconscious assumptions, it is interesting to see how these respondents describe the comparison of their experience to their expectations at the end of the first year. It should be noted that these expectations/experience rankings did *not* generally prove to be predictive of respondents' senses of satisfaction or success. Perhaps by the end of the year students have worked through any disappointment or, perhaps, while everyone has expectations, this contrast is not as powerful as some might fear it is.

Table 27

Experience versus Expectations Regarding Academic Load

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Much heavier	5	9.6
	Heavier	16	30.8
	as expected	30	57.7
	Lighter	1	1.9
	Total	52	100.0
Missing		3	
Total		55	

It might be hypothesized that someone whose expectations are met or exceeded in a positive way would be more likely to feel successful or satisfied. On the other hand, someone whose expectations were not met or actually challenged in a negative way might be "set-up" to self-assess as less satisfied or less successful. The inferential statistics at the end of this chapter indicate that these experiences, either way, are generally not determinative or predictive. Reviewing the responses, we find that over 50% of respondents found the academic load to be as they expected, 30% heavier, and about 10% much heavier. With regard to community life, less than 50% had their expectations met; with almost 25% experiencing it as more closed or very closed, and almost 28% as more open or very open. It is interesting to note that twelve respondents (over 20%) did *not* answer this question about community life. One explanation could be the number of commuter students taking only one or two classes who simply do not have time to experience the community life.

Table 28

Experience versus Expectations Regarding CST Community Life

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Very closed	1	2.3
	More closed	10	23.3
	as expected	20	46.5
	More open	9	20.9
	Much more open	3	7.0
	Total	43	100.0
Missing		12	
Total		55	

A third aspect of a theological school that I have a particular interest in is the area of Student Services. This area includes Admissions, the Registrar, the Library, and the

bookstore. These are both functionally important areas for students to get their needs met and can become symbolic of how the institution cares for its students. Because the classroom experience is made possible and sustained by various aspects of Student Services, this area is crucial. However, Student Services staff is usually not as highly trained and has less institutional status and power than faculty. Their jobs involve fairly routine concrete tasks. This can, somewhat paradoxically, mean that the manner, attitude, or process they utilize--the non-verbals--can become emotionally loaded for the student recipient. Interestingly enough, this survey indicated that almost 40% found Student Services to be more or much more responsive than they expected, 15% unresponsive or somewhat unresponsive, and about 45% as expected. The open-ended questions and other "write-in" additions indicate that the main problems are with Student Services providing enough flexibility to meet the needs of commuter students who come to classes in the evening and those who would like Sunday afternoon library hours.

Table 29**Experience versus Expectations Regarding Student Services**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unresponsive	2	3.8
	Somewhat unresponsive	6	11.3
	As expected	24	45.3
	More responsive	13	24.5
	Much more responsive	8	15.1
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

The last expectation-versus-experience question concerns overall time commitment. Almost 60% of respondents judged that the demands were heavier or much heavier than they expected, with the remaining 40% having their expectations met. Comparing these numbers to the academic load numbers, it is clear that 20% more found that their experience challenged their expectations. I imagine this is because the non-academic load areas of the theological education process are more ambiguous and hard to evaluate ahead of time. For instance, quite a few commuter students wrote-in that they would change either their commuting distance to improve their experience or their planning to deal with the "cost" of commuting. Students also wrote-in that time-management, reading speed, and other study skills were areas they would change to improve their experience.

Table 30**Experience versus Expectations for Overall Time Commitment**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Much heavier	6	11.3
	Heavier	24	45.3
	as expected	23	43.4
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

Responses to Open-ended Questions

The last two questions are open-ended questions where respondents were simply asked to write in what they thought. Some persons did not write anything; others wrote one word or phrase; still others wrote a paragraph or attached a separate sheet of paper with a more detailed response. These last two questions focus on areas of possible change--in the individual and the institution. Question number 32 of the survey is as follows: *"If you could change one aspect of yourself to improve your experience of your first year of graduate theological education what would it be?"* The second open-ended question is similar: *"If you could change one aspect of Claremont School of Theology to improve your experience of your first year of graduate theological education what would it be?"* A complete write up of all responses is included in the appendix.

In terms of self-change, there are four general types of changes respondents suggested. One area might be described as addressing the physical demands of theological education including a need for greater stamina, youthfulness, and better health, such as weight management. A second type of change, mentioned by about one-

third (13 persons) who responded to this question, could be described as organization or self-discipline. This area included time-management, overcoming procrastination, faster reading and note-taking, and better money management. A third type of change respondents would make in themselves involves preparation *before* beginning their studies. Some comments of this type are the following: move closer to campus or at least stay in commuter dorms, improve their English skills, get a better Biblical foundation, study full-time, and be aware of the toll commuting takes on studies. The last general type of change respondents proposed for themselves involves emotional and spiritual self-care. Respondents noted that they wished they would be less perfectionistic, worry less, trust their own abilities more, have more confidence, be more "gentle" with themselves, be more "aggressive" about getting information and being their own advocate, and be both more realistic about the openness of the CST community and more involved in it.

The changes respondents suggested for the institution that would improve the first-year experience could also be broken down into four general categories. However, it is interesting to note that three respondents wrote "change nothing" and one included "I love the school." This is another reflection of the somewhat surprising level of overall satisfaction and success, given the context of a "crisis" in theological education discussed by experts in the field. Perhaps the "crisis" is not primarily a crisis for students but is a crisis for administrators and faculty facing budgetary and denominational critique. Perhaps administrators and faculty, at least at the Claremont School of Theology, have been able to continue to provide a quality experience for students even in the midst of some larger transitions.

One general category of change is focused on community life. The following specific suggestions were included: more emphasis on community, a "great sense of *esprit de corps*," more interaction between professors and students, more community activities including athletic activities, a more "caring spirit among students and faculty," and less individualism. Another general category mentioned focuses on spirituality and includes a desire for more emphasis on spirituality and holiness, more focus on worship life, more focus on the local church, and the need for a clergy advisor (as well as a faculty advisor). There is some overlap between spirituality and the next area of needed change. These changes might be characterized as practical or pragmatic and include the need of more emphasis on the local church. They also include a need for better advising, better financial aid or lower costs, more consistent class load, Sunday afternoon library hours, smaller classes, more communication, additional courses and faculty in the New Testament, sample syllabi for orientation, more evening classes, and more and/or private commuter over-night housing. This area of "practical" concerns was by far the most prevalent with over 50% of all the written suggestions.

The last category of suggestions for institutional change is difficult to characterize and was raised by only three respondents. One way to describe these concerns is to suggest that some students experience an atmosphere of "political correctness" that troubles them. This is how they describe their concern: there is a need for more openness to opposing views, the Christian tradition needs to be held in a "place of appropriate honor," there needs to be greater respect for the Bible, and CST needs to "diminish the recurrent phallophobic bias." While it may be easy to ignore this type of critique from a small minority of students, it is also possible that improved communication, orientation,

worship, and community life might help more theologically conservative students feel more supported. Students who experience historical, biblical, and feminist critical methods as particularly problematic might be able to learn better if they participated in more community-building activities and focus. Moreover, because I believe these few more extreme critiques might point to concerns shared by many students to a lesser degree it is important not to disregard them. Perhaps a definition of “politically correct” provides some insights. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it this way:

Politically correct

Adj. Abbr. PC, p.c.

1. Of, relating to, or supporting a program of broad social, political, and educational change, especially to redress historical injustices such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.
2. Being or perceived as being overconcerned with this program, often to the exclusion of other matters.⁵

Perhaps the most helpful learning from both the definition and the student experiences is that the goal of being politically correct can be *both* a helpful and worthy strategy to overcoming historical and structural oppression *and* become, or be perceived as, overwhelming other important concerns and perspectives. This seems a worthwhile reminder to balance and continually reevaluate an inclusive approach to addressing current students’ needs and persistent structures of dominance and subordination.

However, it is also possible that concerns about political correctness point to the question of just how diverse a theological school can be and still be effective. The question of evaluating ethical and functional limits to diversity needs to be addressed through further research.

One respondent wrote a full-page discussion on an attached sheet of paper.

⁵The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 3rd ed., s.v. “politically correct.”

[M]y wish is that there will be more activities where CST people can get better acquainted with each other. My impression of CST community is too individualistic to build a sense of community of love and friendship. I know that there is a regular chapel service where people can meet each other. But most of the people are supposed to be passive throughout the worship service. It is my opinion that seminary life has to be more than vocational school life such as attending the classes, writing papers, getting credits, and then graduating. I know that most people are busy juggling family, job, and school works. In the meantime, we lose a rare chance of experiencing friendship across culture, race, ethnicity, and all kinds of differences. Over the year, I notice that “birds of a feather flock together.” In other words, people with same race and cultural background cling together while there seems to be not enough chance to venture to mingle with people with a different culture. There doesn’t seem to be interaction between students outside the classroom. I don’t think that most CST people are xenophobic. I don’t think CST encourages maintaining racism. But more live interaction among students doesn’t seem to be encouraged. Is this a form of status quo? To create an environment where CST can have a sense of community, I would like to suggest:

Hiring a full time staff (or utilizing a personnel) in charge of community life (activities). Encourage[ing] athletic activities. Theological education has to be not just cerebral, but also holistic. Human being is a psychosomatic being. Sound Body, Sound Mind. An hour’s playing together can get people more acquainted with each other than spending a year of discussion. I hope that there will be a volleyball court on campus where people can have fun playing under the sunny Southern California sun. I am wondering whether it would be a good idea for suggesting students’ mini-marathon, or half-marathon for the President’s award once per semester respectively on special occasions. That may be discriminating against the physically handicapped and aged persons. But the sense of community building and zest and excitement of the CST people may be enhanced.

Having lived in the CST community for only one year, I admit that my perspective is pretty limited and possibly distorted. Besides, due to the cultural differences, my suggestions may not be appropriate to CST.

Write-in Comments

Beyond the comments to the two open-ended questions at the end of the survey, some persons added other comments to questions throughout the survey. The following longer comment was included in response to the question about community life and how experience compared to expectations in this area. This comment is important to underscore the argument that this survey sample does include persons who had both positive and negative experiences during their first year at CST.

One class that I took which was jointly sponsored by the Graduate School [department] of Religion [and] CST, went way overboard in “political correctness” in my opinion. I far prefer the classes where people do not jump to question others’ motives and label them bad people just because they may have different ideas or perspectives. The class was very disheartening because one of the major things I get from my classes is a sense of community and there was far too much negativity and suspicion in this class for that to happen. By contrast the ETSC [Episcopal Theological School at Claremont] classes had a very collegial and respectful atmosphere where ideas and feelings could be discussed without personal attacks, even when people disagreed.

Similarly, on the topic of “specific concerns of a pluralistic community”

(Question # 29), a number of respondents wrote in further responses. Some responses were critical about this area of focus at CST: “too much in some cases [attention] to these concerns,” “there should be more sensitivity to those who are less committed to homosexuality and radical lesbianist feminism.” Other responses were positive and supportive: “it’s been wonderful to be out and affirmed! Thank you!” and “finally a handicapped restroom.” One respondent identified the need for improved “campus safety (poor lighting at night).” In the area of community life, another respondent attached a separate sheet and wrote the following longer response:

I enrolled in CST with no illusions. My spouse graduates shortly and I was aware what it would take. BUT, I do feel that everything is basically set up for the on campus student. There is little feeling of belonging for someone who has to fight rush hour traffic. That’s a choice that I make. If I didn’t work I couldn’t afford to attend. But, CST does not give me any those ‘warm fuzzys’ of community. It is more of a means to the end than an exciting journey. Some days I’d just like to enjoy the journey.

Looking at the area of primary sources of emotional support, a couple of “other” sources were noted. These included a respondent’s “Emmaus Reunion Group,” (a spiritual retreat program usually sponsored by the United Methodist Church), a number of respondents included their children as a primary source of emotional support. Other additional sources of support included: “congregation of my home church” and the “leader and students in Movement of the Spirit (student liturgical dance group at CST).”

Underscoring again the range of positive and negative experience covered within this sample group, one respondent wrote, “I withdrew from the program.” This respondent included a number of specific comments based on this presumably unpleasant first-year experience. The following is a summary of the respondent’s experience and comments: commuting 2 and 1/2 hours, the most rewarding aspects of the year: “intellectual stimulation,” with regard to academic success: “I never completed either class – I have withdrawn from the program,” spiritual meaning: “meaningful” -- “In that I learned some life lessons,” emotional satisfaction: very unsatisfying -- “if I had stayed, due to stress, but the courses were interesting,” overall satisfaction: very unsatisfying -- “I dropped out because I couldn’t juggle all the demands of school and work and commute, the classes were interesting, but it was way too much work,” impact on self-esteem: improved -- “I felt good that I got in and tried it.” This respondent not only provides a balance to the general positive and successful tone of many of the respondents, but also provides detail enough to offer a few surprises. For instance, it is interesting to note that s/he felt an “improved” sense of self-esteem because of what sounds like a positive valuing of the effort and risk-taking involving in giving theological education a try. This person is also clear that the particular long-distance commuting situation was a key factor in the decision to withdraw and lack of success.

Some added responses focused on how to be better prepared. These included advice a friend considering seminary: she/he would “suggest working w/ spiritual director to form a strong contemplative prayer foundation prior to starting classes.” Other ways to prepare themselves ahead of time included the following: “beefed up my personal library to defray book costs;” or be better prepared by learning “speed reading,”

having “moved on-campus or closer to campus--[but] can’t afford it,” by taking “even more philosophy and science,” and more “prerequisite courses.”

Some comments seem to focus on support systems, both on-campus and in family situations. For instance, one respondent wrote “I was at a church, my fiancée was at a different church, and my children go to a third church. I would like us all to worship together. Moving was difficult while in school. It’s very hard to study with my three boys around – ages 5,8, & 10.” Another added, with regard to the responsiveness of Student Services: “I am a student taking classes in the evening. There is no consideration taken by the administration to offer services in the hours when students are on campus in the evenings; such as book store hours the first week or two of class. Someone in administration to at least be able to give out or accept forms.”

Inferential Statistical Findings

In addition to the descriptive categories and subjective open-ended questions summarized in the first sections of this review of the data, statistical analysis also provides tools for inferential analysis. Inferential statistical analysis allows the researcher to study relationships that may exist between particular survey responses. Due to the fact that statistical operations cannot rule out random chance relationships, inferential statistics begins with the assumption of the "null hypothesis" and requires a numerical level of statistical validity to be achieved before any predictive or determinative relationship can be inferred. The null hypothesis is simple: factors are assumed to be *unrelated* unless proven at the level of statistical relevance to be related.

For purposes of this research, it seemed most fruitful to investigate whether or not respondents' self-evaluated level of academic success, spiritual meaning, emotional satisfaction, or overall satisfaction could be shown to be related to specific descriptive demographic factors. As we begin this area of investigation it is important to note that this survey found a generally high sense of success and satisfaction reported by the respondents. In terms of academic success, Table 31 shows that the majority of respondents chose the response "successful." No one marked "very unsuccessful," and only two persons marked "unsuccessful." On the positive end of the spectrum, eleven respondents marked "very successful." However, it is an important caveat that it is possible that one of the motivating factors for the persons who did not return their survey was their sense of dissatisfaction or self-evaluation of unsuccessfulness.

Academic Success

Table 31

Self-Perceptions of Academic Success

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unsuccessful	2	3.8
	Successful	39	75.0
	Very successful	11	21.2
	Total	52	100.0
Missing		3	
Total		55	

To understand what factors are most significant, multiple regression analysis was used to determine if a respondent's choice of level of academic success could be predicted by other variables in this survey. "Academic success" was selected as the dependent variable. *All* other variables in the survey were allowed to enter in a step-wise

fashion to determine if any were significant predictors (*except* those variables that are tautologically related to academic success, such as emotions and other evaluations of success and satisfaction, and dichotomous variables with a less than 10% response). Missing variables were replaced through mean substitution and the tolerance level for each variable at each step was well above .30. The procedure identified five independent variables with predictive relationship to academic success as the dependent variable. Table 32 shows the final step of the stepwise regression and predictive variables that entered the equation.

Table 32**Prediction of Student Perception of Academic Success**

		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Variables		Beta		
5	Career counseling	.546	5.244	>.001
	Saved money	-.418	-4.100	>.001
	Religious Studies classes--self	-.477	-4.455	>.001
	Writing Classes -- friend	-.423	-3.882	>.001
	Christian tradition	.259	2.589	.013
a. Dependent Variable: academic success				
b. All other variables were allowed to enter the equation except those tautologically related, such as specific emotions and other success or satisfaction scales, and dichotomous variables with a >10% response.				
c. R = .727 R square = .529 F = 11.015 Significance of F <.01				

As you can see from Table 32, five variables--career counseling, saved money, Religious Studies classes, writing classes, and Christian tradition--entered as independent variables to predict the dependent variable "academic success." The R square of .529 indicates that over 50% of the variation in respondents' sense of academic success is predicted by these five variables. "Career counseling " (beta .549) is a response to the

question “If you knew before starting your first year what you know now, how would you have prepared yourself better?” This is actually a “negative” predictor, because the responses were coded 1 = box checked and 2 = *not* checked.⁶ Six respondents, over 10%, checked career counseling. However, checking the box for “saved money” (beta -.418) is a *positive* predictor due to the coding factor. Similarly, “Religious Studies – self” (beta -.477) is a positive predictor, and both are responses to Question 31 regarding how the respondent could have prepared themselves better for their first year. “Writing classes – friend” (beta -.423) is also a positive predictor in response to Question 32 regarding how respondents would advise a friend considering theological education. Finally, “Christian tradition” (beta .259) is a *negative* predictor chosen by 22 respondents to Question 19 concerning the “most rewarding aspects of your first year”; the whole response was “deepened knowledge of the Christian tradition.”

The fact that career counseling is a *negative* predictor suggests to me that persons who assess themselves as academically successful were certain enough that they did not wish, looking back, that they had worked with a career counselor before beginning their theological education. One learning from this finding might be that it might be helpful to encourage incoming students to consider whether they could benefit from career counseling at the beginning of their first-year before they invest time and money in the process. In contrast, the *positive* predictors--saved money, religious studies for oneself, and writing classes--suggest that students who feel academically successful still have a sense of practical needs and skills that could improve their experience. The *negative*

⁶ The negative and positive Beta scores are misleading throughout this study where response options were “yes” or “no” or check and not checked boxes; because each of these variable were coded 1 = checked and 2 = *not*

predictor of a deepened knowledge of the Christian tradition *might* be interpreted to be a response chosen by more self-described conservative students who, while still generally successful, chose “successful” rather than “very successful” on the available scale for academic successfulness.

The beta scores for these five variables indicate the level of importance of each variable and, in this case, show that the three positive predictors are similar in level of importance (-.418, -.477, -.423). More importantly, the predicative power (indicated by the R square of .529) of these five variables is moderately high.

Spiritual Meaning

The second area of self-assessment the survey asked about is “how spiritually meaningful do you think your first year has been?” As you will note in Table 33, most respondents marked “meaningful.” No one chose the response “very meaningless,” and six persons (around 11%) chose “meaningless.”

Table 33

Respondent's Selected Level of Spiritual Meaning

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Meaningless	6	11.5
	Meaningful	36	69.2
	very meaningful	10	19.2
	Total	52	100.0
Missing		3	
Total		55	

checked, so the negative Beta scores are positive predictors and the positive Beta is a negative predictor. This is a weakness in the data entry and research analysis process.

Table 34 provides the results of the multivariate regression to determine what variables are predictive of a respondent's sense of "spiritual meaning." All other variables were allowed to enter *except* those that are tautologically related such as: specific emotions and other evaluations of success and satisfaction and dichotomous variables with a less than 10% response. Missing variables were replaced through mean substitution and the tolerance level for each variable at each step was well above .30. Four variables entered the equation as having statistically significant predictive correlation with the dependent variable, spiritual meaning.

Table 34

Prediction of Self-Assessment of Level of Spiritual Meaning

		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Variables		Beta		
4	Academic goals	.413	3.819	>.001
	History – friend	-.310	-2.875	.006
	Expectations of campus life	.267	2.435	.019
	Writing Classes – friend	-.249	-2.286	.027
a. Dependent Variable: spiritual meaning				
b. All other variables were allowed to enter the equation except those tautologically related, such as specific emotions and other satisfaction or success scales, and dichotomous variables with a <10% response				
c. R = .656 R square = .431 F = 9.452 Significance of F < .01				

Table 34 shows four independent variables entered the equation to predict "spiritual meaning," the dependent variable: "academic goals, history, expectations of campus life and writing." The R square of .431 indicates that over 43% of the variation in "spiritual meaning" is predicted by the four independent variables. Focus on "academic goals," chosen by fourteen respondents, is a response option for question 19: "what have been the most rewarding aspects of your first year of theological education?" The positive beta (.413) actually indicates a negative predictive relationship because of

yes/no coding. Because this is a negative predictor, we can infer that respondents who found focusing on their academic goals highly rewarding, tended to rate spiritual meaning as lower. However, it is also likely that some students who began theological education with a highly academic focus might not consider spiritual meaning an important part of their graduate educational experience.

The second variable to enter the regression, "history -- friend" (beta -.310), is a positive predictor in response to question 31: "If you had a friend planning to begin theological education what academic subject areas would you suggest they study to be well prepared before starting?" Fifteen respondents chose this variable. The third variable to enter the equation predictive of spiritual meaning is the level of response to the question about the openness of community life at CST. Having one's expectations met or exceeded in the area of openness of campus life, including chapel and student life, seems to be predictive of a greater sense of spiritual meaning. It is a positive predictor (beta .267) because it is coded from 1 – 5, with the higher number a more positive experience. Perhaps there is some tautological relationship here, since experiences of chapel are listed as one of the areas to consider when ranking the openness of campus life. The fourth variable to enter the equation as predictive of spiritual meaning is "writing" class (beta -.249) for a friend's preparation for theological education, selected by thirty-two respondents. It is a positive predictor due to yes/no coding.

In summary, a respondent's sense of the first year being "spiritually meaningful" is predicted by her or his *not* checking focus on academic goals as one of the most rewarding aspects of their first year. Positively, choosing "History," having one's expectations met or exceeded in "campus life," and recommending writing classes for a

friend are predictive of a high level of spiritual meaning. It is tempting to interpret spiritual meaning levels as directly related to degree programs. However it is important to note that degree program did *not* enter the equation as a significant predictor, although it could have. The beta scores for these four variables indicate the level of importance, in this case, and show that the negative predictive value of “academic goals” is stronger than the positive values of “history, expectations of campus life, and writing classes.” The overall predicative power (indicated by the R square of .431) of these four variables is fairly high.

Emotional Satisfaction

The next area of subjective self-assessment in this survey is “emotional satisfaction.” Table 35 indicates that some respondents chose each of the possible boxes: “very unsatisfying, unsatisfying, satisfying, and very satisfying.” The majority of respondents chose “satisfying” and “very satisfying.” To summarize, approximately 20% of respondents indicated they were emotionally unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, and the remaining approximately 80% selected satisfied or very satisfied.

Table 35

Respondent’s Self-Assessment of Emotional Satisfaction

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	very unsatisfying	2	3.8
	Unsatisfying	9	17.0
	Satisfying	31	58.5
	very satisfying	11	20.8
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

The regression to determine what independent variables are determinative of the dependent variable “emotional satisfaction” is presented in Table 36. All other variables were allowed to enter *except* those that are tautologically related such as: specific emotions and other evaluations of success and satisfaction, and dichotomous variables with a less than 10% response. Missing variables were replaced through mean substitution and the tolerance level for each variable at each step was well above .30.

Table 36

Prediction of Self-Assessment of Emotional Satisfaction

		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Variables		Beta		
5	Chaplain (Military, Hospital, Prison)	-.414	-3.917	>.001
	One-way commute	-.469	-4.354	>.001
	African American/Black	-.328	-3.077	.003
	CST staff	-.257	-2.453	.018
	Career counseling	.216	2.083	.042
a. Dependent Variable: emotional satisfaction				
b. All other variables were allowed to enter except those tautologically related, such as specific emotions and other satisfaction or success scales, as well as dichotomous variables with a < 10% response.				
c. R = .692 R square = .479 F = 8.997 Significance of F <.01				

As you can see in Table 36, five independent variables entered the equation to predict the dependent variable, “emotional satisfaction.” The R square of .479 indicates that over 45% of the variation in “emotional satisfaction” is predicted by five independent variables. First, an interest in being a chaplain, checked as current vocational objective by nine respondents, is a *positive* predictor with the negative (beta -.414) due to the coding setup. Second, the length of one-way commute is a *positive* predictor (beta -.469)

with the longer commute times coded with a higher number. Third, African American respondents, five persons or 9.3% of participants, seem to have higher emotional satisfaction ($-.328$ beta, due to yes/no coding). Given the focus of this research on issues of diversity, this is an important finding. This finding indicates that there is some evidence in this study to suggest that cultural/ethnic background may affect one's level of emotional satisfaction at the Claremont School of Theology.

However, it is interesting to note that the variable coded "yes" or "no" for Anglo/Euro-American, combining all persons of color and international students, did *not* enter this equation. Another factor that may be significant is that four African American students were men and *one* was female. By comparison, among Asian American respondents there were three women and two men and the Hispanic American/Latino/Chicano students were *all* three female. However, all five international students who responded to the survey were men. Exploring the interrelationship between cultural/ethnic categories and sex in the context of a theological school might be a fruitful area for further research.

The fourth positive predictive (beta $-.257$, with yes/no coding) variable "CST staff," which was a response choice to the question regarding who have been the most significant emotional support persons this year. It warms the heart of an Admission Director to know that staff persons are significant support persons, and that there may be a positive predictive relationship with emotional satisfaction. This finding strengthens the argument that all persons in the theological education community have an opportunity to provide "beyond the classroom" support, perhaps even a basic level of pastoral caregiving, that can improve students' experience.

Choosing “career counseling” as a way to better prepare for the first year of theological education is a negative predictor (beta .216). This might be interpreted to mean that those students who look back over their first year and wish they had worked with a career counselor are feeling ambivalent about their reasons for pursuing theological education. It is true that it may be a good idea for Admission and Recruitment personnel to encourage the consideration of counseling early on in an applicant’s process so that students who choose to matriculate have worked these issues through. Also, it may be important to consider if this question arises at the end of the first year because the actual experience of theological education is so different from many persons’ preconceptions.

The most potentially significant finding of this statistical analysis is that the cultural/ethnic group African American/Black correlates to a higher than average level of emotional satisfaction. This is the first evidence of a particular connection between a classic demographic descriptor and the quality of subjective experience in this survey.

The beta scores for these three variables indicate the level of importance of each variable and, in this case, show that two factors are of similar importance: interest in chaplaincy and commute distance. African American/Black identity is in the middle as far as variable strength, CST staff support and the negative association with the need for career counseling are weaker. The combined predicative power (indicated by the R square of .479) for these five variables is fairly high.

Overall Satisfaction

The final question of subjective assessment of satisfaction on this survey was: “Overall, how satisfying has your First Year been, in your own opinion?” As Table 37 illustrates, all four possible boxes (“very unsatisfying, unsatisfying, satisfying, very satisfying”) were utilized. Clearly the predominant levels of response were in the “satisfying” and “very satisfying” categories.

Table 37

Overall Satisfaction

overall satisfaction

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	very unsatisfying	1	1.9
	unsatisfying	8	15.1
	satisfying	29	54.7
	very satisfying	15	28.3
	Total	53	100.0
Missing		2	
Total		55	

It is significant that forty-four respondents (83%) selected satisfying or very satisfying and only nine respondents (17 %) described their level of satisfaction as unsatisfying or very unsatisfying. This was also a question that almost all participants in the survey answered, with only two responses missing. Table 38 details the independent variables found to be predictive of the dependent variable overall satisfaction. All other variables were allowed to enter *except* those that are tautologically related such as: specific emotions and other evaluations of success and satisfaction, and those

dichotomous variables with a less than 10% response. Missing variables were replaced through mean substitution and the tolerance level for each variable at each step was well above .30.

Table 38

Prediction of Student Perception of Overall Satisfaction

		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Independent Variables		Beta		
5	Ethnicity concerns	-.325	-2.993	.004
	Intellectual challenge	-.339	-3.203	.002
	Family & friends supportive	.240	2.183	.034
	Family of origin	.346	3.006	.004
	CST students	-.261	-2.171	.035
a. Dependent Variable: overall satisfaction				
b. All variables were allowed to enter the equation except for those tautologically related, such as specific emotions and other success or satisfaction scales, or dichotomous variables with a less than 10% response.				
c. R = .686 R square = .471 F= 8.711 Significance of F <.01				

As you can see in Table 38, five independent variables enter the equation to predict “overall satisfaction,” the dependent variable. The R square of .471 indicates that over 47% of the variation of “overall satisfaction” is predicted by these independent variables. The first independent variable to enter is “ethnicity concerns,” a positive predictor (beta $-.325$) marked with a plus sign by twenty-eight respondents in response to Question 30: “How well is CST doing in addressing the following concerns of its pluralistic community?” “Intellectual challenge” (beta $-.339$) was chosen by thirty-five respondents (55%) as one of the rewarding aspects of the first year (positive predictors

due to the reverse Beta coding⁷). Emotional support from other “CST students” (beta -.261), chosen by twenty-one respondents, is a positive predictor, given the yes/no coding. There are two negative predictors: “family of origin” as a source of significant emotional support, chosen by nineteen respondents (beta .346); and “family and friends supportive” (beta .240). A positive response to CST’s concern for ethnicity may be said to strengthen the argument that persons with a positive valuation of diversity and plurality are, at least initially, more satisfied with their theological education in a diverse context.

It is difficult to know how to interpret the negative predictors of overall satisfaction. Perhaps reliance on family of origin, and a sense that family and friends are supportive of one’s decision to study, can be a deterrent to building new supportive relationships in one’s first year of study. Given the positive associations in this regression and the previous two with CST student, staff, and expectations of campus life, it may be that these findings support those of Carroll, Wheeler, Aleshire, and Marler that “being there” is a key component in theological education.⁸ The emotional support systems question is a mixed bag--those who found significant support with other CST students tended to have higher satisfaction, while those who depended on their families-of-origin tended to have lower satisfaction. This might support the argument that being more full-time, engaged, and identified with the community and student body does

⁷The negative and positive Beta scores are misleading throughout this study where response options were “yes” or “no” or check and not checked boxes; because each of these variable were coded 1 = checked and 2 = *not* checked, so the negative Beta scores are positive predictors and the positive Beta is a negative predictor. This is a weakness in the data entry and research analysis process.

⁸ Jackson Carroll et al, Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools.

contribute to a higher sense of satisfaction. Perhaps this is not a surprising finding--but it is significant given the pressures, at theological schools nationwide, to offer part-time, evening, satellite, and distance-learning options. The issues of relationships and communities, as well as a focus on intellectual challenge and appropriate academic expectations, are likely to continue to be a significant factor in the success of these programs.

The beta scores for these five variables indicate the level of importance of each variable and, in this case, show that three factors are similar in level of importance: ethnicity concerns, intellectual challenge, and the negative association with family-of-origin support. The two other variables are weaker--the positive value of CST students' support and the negative association with family and friends supporting the pursuit of theological education. The overall predicative power (indicated by the R square of .471) of these five variables is moderately high.

Table 39**Overall Satisfaction by Ethnic/Cultural Group and Sex**

			Overall Satisfaction				Total
Sex			Very unsatisfying	Unsatisfying	Satisfying	Very satisfying	
Female	Cultural/Ethnic Group	African Am./Black				1	1
		Celtic Am.				1	1
		Anglo/Euro-Am.	1	2	13	5	21
		Asian Am.			3		3
		Hispanic Am./Latino/Chicano			1	2	3
		Black & Anglo				1	1
	Total		1	2	17	10	30
Male	Cultural/Ethnic Group	African Am./Black			3	1	4
		Anglo/Euro-Am.		3	3	4	10
		Asian Am.			2		2
		International Student		3	2		5
		Anglo & Native Am			1		1
	Total			6	11	5	22

Other Correlations

Since multiple regression analysis has yielded only a few predictive correlations between primary descriptors of social location (age, ethnic/cultural, sex, relational status, and denomination), Chi Square analysis has been applied to a few specific demographic factors to determine any statistical significance. Table 40 compares UMC respondents with non-UMC respondents on their level of satisfaction.

Table 40

UMC vs. Non-UMC Overall Satisfaction Level

		Overall satisfaction		Total
		More Unsatisfied	More Satisfied	
UMC vs. Non-UMC	UMC	6	16	22
	Non-UMC	3	28	31
Total		9	44	53

The Pearson Chi Square significance level obtained for these frequencies is .174, which is *not* less than .05, so we accept the null hypothesis. As mentioned earlier, statistical operations assume that some correlations will occur by random chance. Therefore, to set aside the assumption that no significant relationship exists, we must prove one at a statistically significant level. In this case, where the Non-UMC respondents must be combined to have enough responses to compare with UMC respondents, we find that overall satisfaction is *not dependent* on UMC affiliation.

The question of whether or not a respondent's rating of her or his political position may have some association with satisfaction with first-year experience seemed a possible

connection. Table 41 shows the Chi Square of the association of political self-descriptions, with the response options reduced to two summary categories and the statistical relationship to level of overall satisfaction.

Table 41

Satisfaction Level within Political Groupings

			Overall Satisfaction 2		Total
			More Unsatisfied	More Satisfied	
Self Political 2	More Conservative	Count	7	19	26
		Expected Count	4.0	22.0	26.0
		% of Total	13.5%	36.5%	50.0%
	More Liberal	Count	1	25	26
		Expected Count	4.0	22.0	26.0
		% of Total	1.9%	48.1%	50.0%
Total		Count	8	44	52
		Expected Count	8.0	44.0	52.0
		% of Total	15.4%	84.6%	100.0%

This statistical analysis, a Pearson Chi Square, provided a significance level for these frequencies of .021, which is less than .05 for the null hypothesis, therefore “overall satisfaction” *is* dependent on self understanding of political conservative/liberal continuum in this sample. Both the “self political” scales and the “overall satisfaction” scales were summarized into bivariates to provide enough cases for chi-square evaluation. This is a significant finding because it supports the hypothesis that political or theological diversity and difference may be more challenging in a theological school like Claremont than racial, sex, or age group differences.

In contrast, it is interesting to note that the Chi Square tests of whether a respondent’s theological or political self-understandings are related to their descriptions of CST’s theological or political stance indicate these variables are not related. None of

the significance levels met the less than .05 test to be considered sufficiently rare to be dependent. Therefore, it is evident that even the identification of liberal versus conservative perspectives is fairly nuanced. Moreover, students perceiving themselves as a "match" to the institution's liberal versus conservative stance is not shown to be related.

Similarly, "age group," and the bivariate "Anglo/non-Anglo," were not related, according to chi-square with any of the four areas of satisfaction or success. However, the following Chi Square indicates that "overall satisfaction" is related to whether one is an international student or not.

Table 42

Satisfaction Level for International Students

			Overall Satisfaction 2		Total
			More Unsatisfied	More Satisfied	
International Student	Yes	Count	3	2	5
		Expected Count	.8	4.2	5.0
		% of Total	5.7%	3.8%	9.4%
	No	Count	5	43	48
		Expected Count	7.2	40.8	48.0
		% of Total	9.4%	81.1%	90.6%
Total		Count	8	45	53
		Expected Count	8.0	45.0	53.0
		% of Total	15.1%	84.9%	100.0%

The significance level obtained for these frequencies is equal to .003, which is less than the required .05 to deny the null hypothesis. Therefore, we can conclude that being an international student tends to lower first-year general satisfaction. (The Fisher's Exact test yielded a significance of .02.) However, two important caveats to this conclusion: first, the sample size is too small to be reliable. Secondly, due to both

cultural and linguistic differences, the association could be skewed due to lack of shared understandings of both the meaning of the question and the answer choices. The Chi Square for “international” cultural/ethnic group and “academic success” was very similar to the one above and also significant at a level of $< .05$. The same two caveats as for the association above would clearly apply here.

Summary Impressions

First-year students are experiencing a stressful time of change and transition in their lives. Whether they are young adults preparing for their first career choice or more mature adults changing careers or strengthening their focus and skills in ministry, theological school is hard work on many levels. These students are tired; they need more time, energy, and structure to get their studies done. They are feeling vulnerable and open to new experiences of community. Community activities, especially chapel, are valuable and meet sometimes less conscious needs. These respondents are fairly self-critical. They are clear about their responsibility for their education but may be frustrated by their lack of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resources to address the demands of theological education. If support groups could be structured in convenient and approachable ways, first-year students might benefit from sharing their questions and struggles. Another helpful approach might be mentoring from persons who are not directly attached to the school but who have experience with theological education. Mentors might be able to help bolster self-confidence and support the creation or refinement of systems to prioritize, focus, and continue to clarify first-year students' sense of professional and/or vocational call or direction. Also, concrete skills are needed

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by most students to address this type of graduate studies successfully: time management, efficient reading strategies, effective note taking, and improved writing skills.

This survey, and my anecdotal experience, indicates that community life and spirituality are closely related. This may seem obvious at a theological school, but the investment of time and energy by faculty and students is not always focused to support this reality. The school needs a consistent and inclusive focus on community worship--regular weekly chapel, other small group prayer services, and special events.

Coursework and professors need to be engaged and involved on a regular basis, and special interest groups within the community need to be encouraged to participate in worship planning and leadership. Due to the breadth of religious and theological traditions and positions represented in the community, a regular and sustained effort is needed to encourage tolerance for a wide range of worship styles and leadership.

Worship can be one of the key places of learning and practicing respect and care for others across significant and "irreconcilable" differences of tradition and practice. This type of engagement requires trust, effort, and investment by the institution and its primary staff--faculty, administrators, and support staff.

The basic challenges for the Claremont School of Theology, and many other mainline Protestant theological schools, are the following:

1. Formulating and communicating a clear sense of inclusive, supportive environment respectful of differences and with a discerning openness toward others.

2. Providing a range of worship and spirituality-related experiences to support the discernment process many students are in and also to challenge them to be more inclusive.
3. Providing the staff and infrastructure to communicate and support a caring spirit among students, faculty, and staff due, perhaps, to some sense of common values of furthering justice in society.
4. Continuing to struggle with how to support and encourage a holistic approach to education and life while recognizing that many students, as well as faculty and staff have significant responsibilities and priorities outside the community.
5. Specifically, addressing the challenge of understanding and supporting the differing needs of residential full-time students, commuting students, and students at a distance through satellite and distance-learning initiatives.

Chapter 5

Rethinking Diversity

The challenge of rethinking, expanding, and responding to the diversity present in contemporary mainline Protestant theological education exists in the context of the larger pastoral theological challenge to define our lives and ministries by the gospel call to reflect both key aspects of God's nature--justice and mercy, discerning judgement and prevenient grace. Taking a fresh look at the nature of the diversity from theological students' perspectives calls for decision-making and justice-making to achieve inclusiveness, fair allocation of resources, and address the potential failure present in passivity, ignorance, or benign neglect. An expanded vision of contextual diversity also illuminates the riches, grace, and mercy already present in the midst of the increasing complexity. My experience of glimpsing the amazing lives and experiences theological students bring with them into the community is a driving force behind this study. Yes, there are aspects of diversity that present problems to be solved and call into question whether institutional values are being lived out. However overwhelming, the news is good! Diversity on many and varied levels and aspects, some yet to be named, is exciting, energizing, amazing, and seems to come with an extra measure of God's redeeming grace to offset our human short-sightedness. The pastoral theological themes are the perennial ones--justice and mercy--and, specifically how to best understand our context so that we might further incarnate them in our time and place.

Some specific aspects of this study to be examined and built on are, first, that diversity has been defined in a limited way by primarily demographic categories such as

race, sex, and age. My sample indicates that CST has areas of significant demographic diversity. However, my inferential statistics indicate that these aspects of diversity are not predictive of a student's quality of experience at CST. The findings that are informative are other significant aspects of difference and diversity including, but not limited to, the following: household situation, commute time, outside employment, religious background (both affiliation and experience with the institutional church), and professional goals and motivation for theological education. These "diversities" are all potentially influential factors or *types* of diversity that impact the quality of the first-year theological education experience.

The results of this study have helped to clarify key questions that need to be addressed concerning theological students and diversity. These questions include the following:

How do the students in a specific sample experience "diversity?"

How does the data collected stretch the usual definition/description of diversity?

What are characteristics that redefine diversity in this context?

What concerns and dilemmas do this expanded understanding of diversity pose?

What critical issues do the respondents to this survey identify that might provide criteria for improvements to graduate theological education? How do we explain the lack of crisis present in these survey results, given the larger literature about the "crisis in theological education?"

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate possible responses to these and other related questions, based on this study, and consider more general implications of these findings. In other words, if a quantitative survey of first-year theological students,

analyzed from a pastoral theological, care, and counseling perspective, yields a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the diversity present in contemporary mainline Protestant theological education, what does that understanding suggest for theological education?

Diversity in “Theological Identity”

A first way in which my study and experience with CST first-year students expands or refocuses the meaning of “diversity” is in the area of diversity of religious affiliations. More specifically, CST students represent a broad range of experience and background with the institutional church, for example, familiarity with biblical texts and the traditions and practices of mainline Protestant churches. Christian identity cannot be assumed as a prerequisite for being a student at CST. The range of religious identities includes various Protestant denominations, non-religious persons, as well as representatives other faith traditions (Jewish, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and faith stances based significantly on eastern religious traditions). It is significant that United Methodist students are only about 40% of respondents in this survey. However, most respondents are from Protestant traditions, just over 5% Roman Catholic and the same number with “no affiliation.” It is significant for a deeper understanding of the CST context and community that, while those affiliated with the United Methodist Church are the single largest group, they are not a majority.

While my study did not specifically ask about the depth of persons’ backgrounds within their noted religious affiliation, my experience as Admission Director is that a significant number are fairly new to the church or have made a significant

denominational change from the tradition in which they were raised. These questions of personal church experience point to the question of what role the theological school has in formation for ministry. Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and co-author of the recent study of theological education Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools, summarized this concern in a February 1999 issue of The Christian Century.

The typical seminary student is in his or her late 30s, is probably attending a church of a denomination in which she was not raised -- even if she had been in church in childhood and adult years. . . . For a variety of reasons, most of these students don't have the kind of formation that the church provided in an earlier time. The seminary may in fact be her point of entry into the faith tradition. . . . The seminary is being asked to do things it really hasn't done much before. Seminaries are trying to figure out how to be appropriately rigorous intellectual environments, while at the same time being asked to provide remedial work on what it means to be believer before God and a community of believers.¹

An insight of my study of theological students is that students may not, in general, be in crisis, themselves, but the variety of backgrounds they represent--and, in particular, the lack of formal church background--precipitates a crisis for the churches and theological schools. These schools, particularly where they are seminaries for a specific denomination, as CST is for the United Methodist Church, must reenvision their role and responsibility in dialogue with the churches about how to inspire, educate, and enable good religious leaders.

Returning to the student experience, there were respondents who cited a concern that either the Bible and/or the Christian tradition were not treated with enough respect or esteem. My interpretation of these responses is that the socio-historical critical method of analysis utilized by faculty in most classes strikes some students as disrespectful, and

¹ "Seminaries and the Ecology of Faith: An Interview with Daniel Aleshire," Christian Century, 3-10 Feb. 1999, 116.

they may feel the authority of scripture and tradition is being challenged. Some of these concerns may fall into the category of “necessary challenges,” given persons’ usually uncritically held beliefs that rigorous intellectual inquiry challenges. However, it is possible that this area of concern regarding how respect is shown for faith traditions and practices may be the very type of “diversity” that this research finds is the greatest challenge to community and the most difficult to identify and address.

It is useful to develop a simple typology to describe the broad range of experience and/or knowledge about any particular tradition, even within a tradition. A typical example is that UMC students raised in the UMC and with a deep sense of identity and background may find themselves sitting in the same classes with other UMC-affiliated students who are very recent members and even recent converts to Christianity. A shorthand for the long-time faith group member might be a “rooted believer.” At the other end of this continuum the more recently affiliated member might be a “neophyte believer.” Although these categories of religious affiliation are not exclusive, meaning that some persons may fit into more than one category, a third type presents a significant level of difference. This third group of theological students may be described as primarily “seekers.” They are usually a minority within the population of theological students, and may be either “affiliated” or “unaffiliated” with a particular faith tradition. However, regardless of affiliation, they are attending theological school in response to a wish to find or build a working faith stance and may be responding to a sense of ‘spiritual call’ independent of any significant roots in an organized or institutional faith community. Finally, the fourth type of graduate theological student would be persons who would consider themselves “decidedly unaffiliated,” with a clear sense of themselves as agnostic

or atheist. These persons tend to seek theological education for what they understand to be purely intellectual and academic motivations. In summary, the functional focus of diversity in this study is expanded and described by four categories under “religious affiliation:” rooted believer, neophyte believer, seeker, and decidedly unaffiliated.

Diversity in religious affiliation and experience presents a particular constellation of problems and opportunities at a theological school. On one hand, this type of diversity, like most aspects of diversity, presents riches and complexity from which students, faculty, and the educational community can benefit. Certainly these differences are only beginning to be representative of the religious affiliation present in wider U.S. culture and in most academic communities. Furthermore, in the larger discussion of “baby boomers” and their return to churches, even in organized faith-based communities a broad range of religious background is the norm. Therefore, students preparing for professional academic and religious leadership have much to gain from a rich and diverse experience of religious affiliation and experience.

From a number of other perspectives, this type of diversity presents serious challenges to some primary goals of theological education. Pedagogically, CST and other accredited theological schools are charged with achieving a graduate level--reasonably advanced--study of the subject matter. Unlike other many other disciplines, religion is not introduced as part of regular public, or even many private, high school or undergraduate education programs. The home, faith-based communities, churches, and specifically parochial schools are usually the only venues for preliminary study of religion. Therefore, faculty and students, recognizing this breadth of diversity, are challenged to assume no formal knowledge of the subject matter, and, at the same time,

must engage advanced critical analysis to become prepared to teach and lead others in complicated, formative, and potentially life-transforming learning, belief, and practice. This is a tall order for all concerned.

Another challenge presented by diversity in theological identity is that of relationship and community building. Beyond the intellectual bridges that must be built, the subject matter of religion, religious experience, and faith traditions is deeply relational and engages most persons at multiple levels of intellect, emotion, spiritual or religious experience, identity, and community. There is little argument in theological education circles that a considerable part of the learning and integration of key concepts occurs beyond the classroom. Theological students discuss, debate, worship, pray, work, play, and interact non-verbally with each other, faculty, and staff in a myriad of ways which provide opportunities to integrate and absorb the classroom experience. These “beyond the classroom” interactions are vital for this type of learning. While it has been my experience that vast differences in religious affiliation and experience are not necessarily barriers to this beyond-the-classroom integration, there are clearly times when differing worldviews collide and subgroups develop and exclude those who are too different or challenging.

Larry Kent Graham’s work in Care of Persons, Care of Worlds is useful for understanding this type of diversity. My study shares with Graham’s the premise that “to care for persons is to create worlds; to care for the world is to build personhood.”²

² Graham, Care of Persons, Care of Worlds, 13.

In other words, the pastoral care of persons and their intimate relationships is interconnected and interdependent on the particular contexts or worlds in which they live, and visa versa. Within the diversity of religious traditions, and persons' experience within those traditions, are different "worlds" that clearly have enormous impact on their experience of theological education. Graham's "psychosystemic" approach brings into focus the concerns of individual students and the "reciprocal interplay with the theological school systems and other social and cultural systems."³ While religious experience is deeply personal, it is clearly descriptive of a relationship--between a person, other individuals and groups, and God or other understandings of ultimate reality. It is also rooted in the socio-historical system of religious traditions. To become effective, creative leaders, persons need to understand both their individual religious experience and the dynamics between them and within the religious "worlds" they have been formed by and with which they currently affiliate. "Since it is grounded in the loving activity of God, the ministry of care is also ordered by strategic love, redemptive justice, and efforts on behalf of ecological partnership."⁴ Graham's description of the ministry of care clearly links the pastoral and prophetic aspects of pastoral care.

³ Graham defines psychosystemic with the following: "'psychosystemic' refers to the reciprocal interplay between the psyche of individuals and the social, cultural, and natural orders. This interplay is not neutral or static; it is value-laden and teeming with possibilities The concept of psychosystemic orients pastoral caretakers in particular ways to our past concern for individual healing and offers a promising way of conceiving our future relationship to the multiple environments influencing care. . . . [It] enables us to position the ministry of care more prominently among larger social and political interpretations of the pastoral situation, without losing focus of the healing, sustaining, and guiding needed by individuals, groups, and families. It joins microsystemic with macrosystemic arenas of experience." *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds*, 13.

⁴ Ibid. 99.

Persons, according to Graham, seek care in response to crisis or symptoms occurring in one or more of the major dimensions of their lives. In the case of theological students responding to a broad diversity of religious background and affiliation, more than one area of their lives may be challenged. Certainly the nature of the love of God and neighbor may be expressed and interpreted differently, and, also some persons or groups may identify justice issues differently given the theological and religious diversity present in theological education. From Graham's psychosystemic perspective, caretakers work with the careseekers to address the symptoms and crisis by seeking a change or changes in the systems involved. "To promote optimal change, the caretaker must look for the causation of symptomatic crises in the interplay of forces operating in the psychosystemic matrix. . . . Symptoms are to be understood in terms of how they reflect unjust power arrangements."⁵ In the context of religious diversity, an example of this may include both exclusion experienced by conservative or evangelical students, and, generally at the other end of the religious spectrum, the rejection of women and/or homosexuals from full participation in the ministries of the church by some traditions.

Since the focus of this study is to understand and describe the impact of diversity on theological students, Graham's focus on understanding the systemic dynamics as the starting point for any pastoral care is helpful. Graham provides a diagnostic criterion that may lead to a deeper understanding of tensions that surface across differences in religious affiliation and experience as a nontraditional aspect of diversity. The first diagnostic

⁵ Ibid., 98-9.

category is “contextual impairment.” Contextual impairment is defined as a “fracture in one or more of the structures comprising the psychosystemic matrix.” “There are three particular expressions of contextual impairment . . . (1) ruptured boundaries [characterized by too much openness or too much impermeability] . . . (2) disordered accountabilities [characterized here as missing, unresponsive, or inadequate mechanisms in the system for regulating order and exchanges of energy. . . (3) runaway system [characterized by inoperative maintenance mechanisms to protect the system or prevent damage to self or others.”⁶ Comments regarding a lack of inclusiveness of more traditional, conservative, or evangelical religious experience might be understood as contextual impairment in terms of a lack of clarity about appropriate boundaries. A clearer institutional policy and practice regarding religious difference might achieve greater contextual integrity. Achieving what Graham describes as “clear and flexible” boundaries as well as a predictable and ordered process for interaction across religious difference is a challenge in the current theological education context. Faculty, by and large, work to achieve a respect for this kind of diversity in classroom interaction and curriculum. However, the tensions evident in informal student interactions, small group discussions, and the community culture are difficult to address and regulate. Further research and community engagement around both the variety of traditions and the relationship with that tradition as a rooted believer, neophyte believer, seeker, or decidedly unaffiliated would help to promote clearer and more flexible interactions across respected boundaries of basic and significant difference.

⁶ Ibid., 99-100.

Diversity in the Valuation of Diversity

A second major finding of this study regarding the impact and nature of diversity is the difference in response to the questions that presume a theological school have concern for pluralism, multiculturalism, or diversity as a cultural and societal reality, and that this reality is of positive value to theological education. Negatively, critiques include a few respondents to the survey who argue that CST's "pluralism" is limited by a "political correctness" described by one respondent as "phallophobia." CST is seen by some, or in some instances, as not truly 'multicultural' or at least not 'intercultural' because interaction between differing ethnic cultural groups is not sufficiently open and dialogical with adequate safety for intense conversation and appropriate conflict across irreconcilably different and divergent positions and values. As noted above, some students indicate that CST pluralism is often not inclusive of theological conservatism and evangelical Christianity. It can be argued that there is a liberal bigotry toward these "other" Christian traditions.

In the debate over inclusiveness of conservative religious traditions, it may be helpful to acknowledge that a source of tension and conflict between these groups might be the liberal privatization of religious experience and faith traditions--"what you believe about God is a personal matter." Evangelical conversation about one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ tends to be uncomfortable for more "liberal" mainline Protestants. Also, there may be different understandings of separation of church and state, the role of religion in forming moral and ethical judgments and political choices, and legal standards at stake. Third, there may be socio-economic class and educational

stereotypes both liberal Protestants and conservative or evangelical Christians hold of the other. Finally, across these different traditions and positions there are significant differences with regard to the value and appropriateness of emotional and intellectual expressions of faith, in worship and in other settings.

A more general negative critique of CST pluralism is that it has not been successful in addressing a rigid/limited/minimal “liberal” understanding of tolerance which is more of a “don’t ask don’t tell” or “if you don’t have something nice to say don’t say anything at all” approach. This may be tied to a type of white Protestant liberalism that tends to be heavily invested in conflict avoidance and the maintenance of a fairly limited level of relational harmony. This position is sometimes at the expense of more authentic, deep, and honest interactions and relationships. Also, underlying the various responses to a concern for diversity, there are a range of behaviors and values about the definition of “tolerance.” Perhaps a liberal mainstream minimalist “tolerance” of difference is intolerant of open intense dialogue and engagement. White mainstream Protestantism seems to have a strong “hegemonistic” or colonizing tendency, or assumption, at least historically. In other words, it has been assumed that “minorities” can be different and tolerated as such because the “majority” has been dominant and the “others” have been seen as becoming more and more like the dominant group which is seen as better or more advanced culturally—a sense of “manifest destiny!”

Another way to describe and critique “liberal” tolerance is that it is often functionally a general ignorance about the “other” or at least a very superficial non-threatening level of interaction and knowledge. “Don’t bother me and I won’t bother you.” This may be justified by a return to the earlier mentioned argument for a privatized

understanding and expression of religious concerns or experience. Public open discussion may be understood as “taboo” for many Anglo/European Americans with deep roots in the liberal mainline Protestant churches. “Liberalism tells us to tolerate one another, not to cause trouble for each other, but it does not tell us how to build Christian community across our differences.”⁷

On the other hand, positive responses in this study to an institutional valuing of pluralism, multiculturalism, or diversity included write-in comments about the openness of CST community and milieu as a source of joy: “It’s wonderful to be out and affirmed.” Some respondents noted positively that the CST community is “more open” than they expected. A respondent noted her/his appreciation of the addition of accessible restrooms. More than one respondent indicated that “I would not change a thing!” on the question about what they would change about CST that would improve their first-year experience. The survey question specifically designed to address the successfulness of CST approach to “concerns of a pluralistic community” received a significant number of “+” ratings in many categories, such as sexism, racism, physical accessibility, etc. However, this question was too complicated and difficult to code and assess, statistically, so its statistical validity was limited. A future survey should break the “pluralism” questions into separate areas and address each specifically.

Utilizing Larry Kent Graham, again, as a dialogue partner to understand the impact of diversity around the value of diversity, multiculturalism, pluralism, the goal of

⁷ Kathy Rudy, Sex and the Church: Gender, Homosexuality, and the Transformation of Christian Ethics (Beacon Press: Boston, 1997), 109.

change in the psychosystemic ministry of care that is helpful here is the “move from destructive value conflicts to synchronized value orientations.”⁸ Graham’s description of both how to approach destructive value conflicts and move toward a more synchronized interaction is based on a number of important assumptions. First, Graham understands contending values within systems to be normal and healthy. This conflict is only a problem when it becomes too “discordant.” Graham’s assumption is based on process theology’s positive emphasis on complexity and an understanding of harmony that is intense and multiple. He suggested that “pastoral caretaking may be able to assist with these macrosystemic value disorders by looking, at the microsystemic level, at how personal anxieties about survival and finitude intersect with life-style and large economic and nationalistic values.”⁹ In other words, persons on both sides of the issue of the value of diversity may need to be encouraged and provided with the opportunity to connect their own hopes and fears with the institutional expression of multiculturalism, especially if a deeper, true inter-culturalism is the institutional goal and value. However, the assumption that there will be contention between values, and that synchronicity and complex harmony include contention, is an important and, perhaps, underutilized starting point. Particularly for stereotypical WASPs, socialized to a liberal tolerance, as noted earlier, conflict avoidance may be so ingrained as to lead to an inability to participate in any level of discordant heterogeneity.

On the other hand, an evangelical or traditional Christian assumption that Biblical truth and essential doctrines about God are entirely transcendent of culture and significant

⁸ Ibid. 101.

⁹ Ibid.

difference also present a problem for historical-critical contemporary theological education. Sociologists of religion have been noting, since the 1960s, that North American mainline Protestantism is changing. Many mainline denominations are showing losses in membership rolls, and in many communities, the church is no longer central to the culture of that community. This is a time of rapid social change in the United States, and it is having its effects on all religious communities. Aleshire states provocatively that

multiculturalism is not a leftist plot, it's simply what this culture is becoming. . . . The church and its seminaries must deal dramatically with the different forms of religious presence that mark our society. We also have to deal with a culture that has removed religion from its social agenda and placed it on the individual agenda. . . . I can't state this too strongly. Theological schools, to the extent that they train and educate religious leaders, are dependent upon the religious vision of the broader religious communities.¹⁰

Evangelical and traditional churches within Protestantism fit more easily into the “individual agenda” understanding of religion. Although they tend toward a more open and less privatized expression of religious experience they, conversely, have focused on individual commitment to Christ as the basis of salvation rather than a social agenda to transform society toward religiously understood values.

Turning to another dialogue partner, feminist pastoral theological, care, and counseling perspectives are also helpful in addressing concerns about the value of diversity and sometimes contending values of other truth claims. Primarily, these perspectives advocate careful analysis of both the individual and the systemic and contextual dynamics. A feminist perspective on pastoral care that seeks to inspire participation in the “creation of communities of care,” provides a vision applicable to

¹⁰ “Seminaries and the Ecology of Faith,” 122-23.

both the theological school community and the variety of communities and roles persons are preparing to serve at the conclusion of their education.¹¹ Because of feminist pastoral theological concern for the religious communities persons come from and may return to serve its methods might, eventually, be experienced as especially relevant for more conservative theological students.

Kathleen Billman's feminist pastoral care perspective identifies "four creative tensions"¹² in the North American, urban, and multicultural contexts in which she has taught and ministered. These creative tensions are similar to the kinds of concerns first-year students identified as important in response to my survey. The first creative tension that Billman identifies is between "anxiety and possibility." She describes the anxiety experienced by individuals, congregations, and much of the public culture of the United States due to the massive changes and the sense of religious communities struggling to survive. Global, societal, cultural changes present amazing new possibilities for ministry and community. Billman identifies a pastor's role as caregiver as "helping people engage difference creatively" and this includes facing the strong backlash movements against feminism, womanism, and other aspects of difference. Billman's feminist pastoral care perspective identifies the multiple dynamics contributing to anxiety, backlash, and fear, including the shifts in power to speak and advocate for change. She also addresses the pain and anger of lost privilege for some and the general fear and anxiety created by swift social and institutional change.

¹¹ Kathleen Billman, "Pastoral Care as an Art of Community," 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

Billman goes on to identify the meaning-making aspects of engaging difference creatively as “exploring with persons and groups the precarious and promising intersection between their need for boundaries, order, safety, and control *and* their need for freedom, playfulness, imagination, and sacred mystery.”¹³ First-year students identified their needs for support to maintain current connections with church, family, and financial stability, as well as their desire for openness to engage in new community, new relationships, ideas, and beliefs. The question for a pastoral care perspective in the context of a theological school is how might staff, faculty, and students intentionally engage this tension within the theological education community between anxiety and possibility most creatively in the context of significant diversity?

The second creative tension Billman identifies is that of being “simultaneously both oppressed and oppressor.”¹⁴ Beginning with her own experience, Billman describes the uncomfortable reality that practically every theological student faces--being both in a position of some privilege, power, or authority and, at the same time, vulnerable and oppressed by sexist, racist, ageist, classist, heterosexist or other societal structures. She argues this “both/and” awareness is a vital opportunity to develop ministerial ability to be “on the boundaries” with persons in need and where transformation is happening. If persons who do not see the value of diversity or multicultural perspectives were able to see themselves as both oppressed and oppressor, and identify how social structures contribute to this particular form of sin, perhaps this is the point at which these concerns become relevant foci for all theological students.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

The third creative tension Billman identifies is “systemic sin and eschatological hope.”¹⁵ Utilizing the work of Ballou and Gabalac on harmful adaptation,¹⁶ Billman asks important pastoral theological questions focused on the process by which persons maintain hope based, first, on their ability to survive and adapt to challenges in their context. But, just as importantly, persons need to develop the perspective and community support to analyze the cost, distortions of reality, and injustice in their context and name it as systemic sin to be overcome through individual and communal strategies of resistance. Theological students need to develop the strength and insight to work through this process with regard to their own socio-historical context and learn strategies to assist others in this essential process. Hopefully, the use of traditional key theological terms, such as sin and hope, in social-cultural analysis would bridge the gap between a general valuing of diversity and multicultural perspectives and a perhaps more conservative socio-political and religious position that seeks to focus on transcendent religious values.

The fourth creative tension identified by Billman is between “empathy and sociopolitical analysis.”¹⁷ The tension further explicates the need to both enter into and feel the experiences of someone else, across whatever socio-cultural differences exist; and the need to keep enough intellectual perspective to provide significant social and political evaluation. Simply achieving a sense of empathy across differences can lead to being absorbed in the same systemic pain or oppression, rather than providing a liberating

¹⁵ Ibid., 17-19.

¹⁶ Mary Ballou and Nancy Gabalac, *A Feminist Position on Mental Health* (Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas, 1985), 69-97; cited by Kathleen D. Billman, “Pastoral Care as an Art of Community,” in *The Arts of Ministry*, ed. Christie Cozad Neuger (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 18.

¹⁷ Billman, “Pastoral Care as an Art of Community,” 19-20.

or realistic hope for change. Conversely, utilizing a very effective sociopolitical analysis without sufficient empathy and holistic understanding of another's experience may make any engagement inappropriate or impossible due to lack of relationship and trust. Again, perhaps Billman's analyses of the realistic threat an uncritical empathy poses helps get at reasons why all students might not share a concern for diversity and multicultural perspectives. Moreover, perhaps it is important for everyone to identify the need for a creative tension between empathy and sociopolitical analysis to make the move from a multicultural reality to intercultural interaction. Theologically, the challenge remains to strive for both greater justice and mercy, to exercise careful judgment and also reflect God's extravagant grace to persons for whom the value of diversity is obvious and also to those who fear that this diversity threatens the transcendent claims of scripture and tradition.

Another dialogue partner of particular interest for this study is Aart van Beek's work on cross-cultural pastoral care and counseling. This book was selected because it is approachable and offers practical guidance that can be utilized by persons without specialized education or training in theology or counseling psychology. In Cross-Cultural Counseling, van Beek provides a sufficiently simple overview of pastoral care in cross-cultural settings to be applicable to the work of administrators and faculty in theological education. He begins by defining the goal of cross-cultural pastoral care as follows:

Cross-cultural pastoral care must aim to encourage persons away from brokenness and toward wholeness in all areas of their lives. Wholeness ideally would include reconciliation and restoration of communication in personal relations, acceptance of one's own talents and shortcomings, integration of one's value system-in-process, a harmonious experience of one's faith, as well as behavior consistent with one's self concept, values, faith, and the nature of one's relationships.¹⁸

As is clear from this statement of goals, van Beek has an expansive sense of what cross-cultural care can accomplish. However, he also places a premium on harmony, acceptance, and resolution. Because much of theological education confronts person's assumptions and challenges cherished beliefs, there may be limits to how this definition of pastoral care will apply. Moreover, as noted by the women theologians in the Mud Flower Collective living creatively and constructively with conflict may be a very important part of creating a truly diversity-friendly, rather than simply diversity-tolerant, theological school.

The sections of van Beek's book that may be the most useful focus on wholeness, which include a reminder that all parts of a human life are interrelated; he calls this "the unity of experience." He goes on to argue for a shift from "predominately deductive to predominately inductive reasoning . . . the experience of the person needing care becomes the starting point of the caregiver's methodology."¹⁹ A summary of the awareness needed as a starting point is given at the close of the chapter:

The caregiver must be actively sensitive to the interrelated processes at work in the life of the care seeker, the expectations of the caregiver in the particular encounter, the care seeker's place on a gender role and identity awareness scale, the variations within cultural codes . . . class differences, the possibility of other religious worldviews. . . . [T]he influence of intergenerational tensions as a result of cultural traditions, and the nature of culture as processes that provide meaning.²⁰

¹⁸ Aart Van Beek, Cross-Cultural Counseling (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16.

²⁰ Ibid., 26.

Diversity in Extra-Curricular Concerns

A third major expansion to an understanding of diversity based on this study of students' experience is suggested by their responses to the "suggestions for change" questions. One traditional label for understanding these comments could be a broader, more diverse, conception of what might be included in "spiritual formation." However, because a wide range of support issues is included, this is an area of theological education that may be better described by the more generic descriptor "beyond the classroom concerns." Institutionally, beyond the classroom concerns include the full range of informal interactions where students get an intuitive, subjective sense of the values and goals espoused in the classroom and in the curricular structure, and whether they are lived out and embodied in the daily interactions of faculty, administrators, staff, students, and visitors. It is important to note from the outset of this discussion that these issues are complicated by the definitional dependence on culturally constructed understandings of spirituality, self, and community.

Many respondents focused their suggestions for change, both personal and institutional, on various aspects of what could be described as a subcategory of *self-care* concerns: physical health, spiritual practices, emotional well being, and adequate support systems in both their home life and their experience of CST. An outside, "lay" reader of my study has called these "hygiene" issues. Specifically, respondents suggested the following changes they would make in *themselves* to improve their first-year experience: improving her/his stamina, youthfulness, exercise, and weight management; improving study skills and time-management; overcoming procrastination; developing faster

reading, note-taking, and better money management; moving closer to campus; staying in commuter dorms; becoming a full-time student; being less perfectionistic, less worried, and trusting their own abilities; being more confident; more gentle with themselves, more aggressive about asking for information needed, more realistic about CST community, and more involved in CST community. Respondents suggested the following changes they would make in *CST* to improve their first-year experience: more "esprit de corps," more interaction between professors and students, more community athletic activities, a more caring spirit, less individualism, more emphasis on spirituality and holiness, more focus on worship, more focus on the local church, arrangements for clergy advisors, better advising, better financial aid/lower costs, more consistent class load, Sunday afternoon library hours, smaller classes, better communication regarding requirements, additional course and faculty in NT, more evening classes, example syllabi for orientation, more private commuter housing, need to be more open to opposing viewpoints, the Christian tradition held in a "place of appropriate honor," less "phallophobic bias."

As noted earlier, a central complicating factor here is how the "self" is understood and defined. The term "self" in psychological and in pastoral care and counseling literature is limited by its dependence on culture. In the United States context, a "self" has been defined individualistically. Cultural diversity points to a need for a complete rethinking of assumptions about how students define themselves and their identity, as well as their social, communal, family, spiritual, church, and other connections, commitments, responsibilities and resources. On another level, the self-care concerns identified by respondents in this study point to the continuing struggle to connect

embodied human needs and experience with intellectual theological learning and practice as well as the necessities of everyday life. The dichotomizing of mind over body and spirit over matter remains embedded in the experience of theological students.

Secondly, there are definitional and cultural limits to all understandings of “community” and, hence, how CST is to be understood “beyond the classroom.” Many theological students have primary community affiliations related to ethnic, cultural, current work, and family contexts. A relatively small percentage of graduate theological students relocate to become full-time students, without significant outside demands, living on or in close proximity to the campus. While this is a very basic observation, made throughout this study and a trend that began thirty years ago at Protestant seminaries, the implications for the very definition of “community” have not been sufficiently explored. The question of the nature of community is not only a question of logistics such as providing a wide variety of opportunities for interaction. There are underlying issues of difference regarding identity, self, and community that often remain unexamined.

Within psychological and sociological theory and practice, systems theory offers tools for understanding the cultural, institutional, and family systems and may help define some of the common blocks to constructive interaction and change “beyond the classroom.” Used with a culturally sensitive and critical eye, these theories may help unpack the question of what kinds of community respondents indicate they value and need. Some key systems theory concepts point to a richer understanding of community or communities. For instance, “holism” in systems theory describes the reality that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and “open synergy” describes how the parts of

a system work together and change when any part changes. In other words, any part has an impact on every other and the whole. “Semipermeable systems” describes a healthy psychosocial system. “Homeostasis--the tendency of the family system to seek balance” (literally meaning ‘to stay the same’) is a life-protecting principle for creative adaptation which assures a control to prevent organisms being overwhelmed by traumatizing stimuli. The question for this study is whether the classroom and “beyond the classroom” student experiences of CST can become a more intentionally connected semipermeable system with adequate participation to be self-sustaining. For this to happen, homeostatic tendencies healthy and necessary to CST to provide continuity in the midst of change and increasing diversity must be encouraged.

Another dialogue partner that offers particular insights is liberation theology. An evaluation of an appropriate definition of the “common good” would be inclusive of diverse definitions of “self” and “communal” needs for support within the context of theological education. It would be grounded in an evaluation of power dynamics, oppressive structures, and patterns of participation in current CST structures for “beyond the classroom” interactions. These include a conscientization process for development of a critical consciousness in theological students. Some amount of conscientization is also necessary for staff, administration, and faculty who may not be trained to teach in a way that utilizes these insights.

Several practitioners and theorists are combining systems theory and liberation theory. A feminist cross-cultural family approach integrates system theory and liberation concerns: “my clients and I . . . became involved in a process of consciousness-raising that included both the recognition and analysis of oppression related to culture, race,

class, as well as gender and age, and the understanding of its implications for the helping process. . . connect[ing] personal issues and social themes.”²¹ Liberation theory and theology has also influenced thinking specifically about theological education: “mentoring as a method in theological education requires a theological anthropology that takes account of the differences in concrete social locations for the transaction of becoming human in the process of trying to transform the world.”²²

Pamela Holliman also focuses on the mentoring concept. She articulates a woman’s perspective on the importance of feminist mentoring for women and men in ministry. This is particularly helpful because it deals directly with processes that support women becoming ministers and the role of relationships in a broad understanding of theological formation and development. There is a close connection with the formal theological education process and context and, therefore, clear implications for improving the pastoral support of theological students. Holliman defines mentoring as “sharing one’s wisdom with another. Wisdom . . . born of experience, knowledge, and skills combined uniquely in each person.”²³ Holliman also emphasizes in her definitional section that mentoring is “intentional” and usually “chosen” rather than assigned. Understanding the dynamics of power in relationships and self-determination are two key aspects of the unique transformative power of mentoring.

²¹Eliana Korin, “Social Inequalities and Therapeutic Relationships: Applying Freire’s Ideas to Clinical Practice,” in Expansions of Feminist Theory Through Diversity, ed. Rhea Almeida (New York: Haworth Press, 1994), 82.

²²Thistlethwaite, Susan B. and George Cairns, eds., Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring in Theological Education, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 10.

²³ Pamela Holliman, “Mentoring as an Art of Intentional Thriving Together,” in The Arts of Ministry, ed. Christie Cozad Neuger (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 165.

Mentoring is hospitality. Mentoring is welcoming. Mentoring is sharing one's experienced wisdom. Mentoring is investing in another's journey – journeying with another for a period of time. . . . Mentoring is the power of naming. . . . Women have a vision of community that includes both support and risk, nurture and confrontation, tradition and prophecy, solidarity and diversity.²⁴

Diversity in Households

A fourth type of expansion of the usual understanding of diversity evident in this study is the variety of household/family/lifestyles--an aspect of diversity not often identified--which may have a significant impact on the student and theological education community. This diversity includes relational status, number of dependents (both children and elders), number of wage earners, commuting times, and socio-economic backgrounds. My study included some questions addressing this daily reality of student experience but not enough. For instance, I did not ask for household income ranges or number of wage earners. I would include these basic questions in future studies.

A primary finding of this study is the variety of family sizes, including number and "kind"--child or adult--dependents. The outdated stereotype of the young single graduate student living alone, or with a student roommate, and no dependents, on or near campus does still exist. The most typical theological student family these days, however, is likely to be a married or partnered person with one or two dependents (school age children and/or or elderly parents), commuting to campus, and maintaining at least a half-time job elsewhere. Moreover, theological students are more and more likely to be mid-life adults, single by divorce or other life circumstances, with young adult children who require some support--financial and/or emotional--and an elderly parent living with them

²⁴ Ibid., 183.

or near by, requiring some support--financial and/or emotional. In addition, the diversity in family types includes partnered or non-partnered students in either “traditional” family structures, such as heterosexual marriage, or more “non-traditional” relationships, such as committed homosexual partnerships and relationships--both custodial and non-custodial--with children. For the previously mentioned political and practical reasons, respondents were not asked to identify their sexual orientation or preference. Therefore, lifestyle and family issues related to sexual orientation or preference are hidden. Similarly, many other missing voices in the family or household area are hinted at in the survey results and come clearly to mind from personal experience with theological students. This is an area that has an enormous impact on student needs and resources and deserves much more careful and thoroughgoing study.

Family and lifestyle expansions of the understanding of diversity may also include economic or class differences. These include access to economic resources and assumptions about the valuing of higher education personally and by the student’s family-of-origin. Financial constraints and the need to work to meet the basic needs of everyday life seriously limit some students’ educational and community interaction. Other students choose to commute, buy all the books they need, and spend minimal time on campus because they have current career options and family situations that they value highly and a lifestyle they wish to maintain. Students may not consider internships or ministry placements because of stereotypical judgements about specific communities due to class, race, educational background, and/or geographic location.

A student’s work situation and need or choice to continue significant wage-earning work places particular stresses and demands on all aspects of that student’s life.

However, like other aspects of diversity, there are experiential riches present in this situation. There is also a need to assess the educational institution's ability to provide financial and infrastructural support for students in this situation. It is often unclear how students from different family situations, generations, and families-of-origin approach the issue of financial aid. Some students, perhaps younger, but not always, may have a sense of entitlement about scholarships and financial aid and/or a willingness to borrow as much money as allowed on their student loans. Other students, perhaps the older cohort, feel they must and should pay their own way and pay as they go. The diversity of approaches is not necessarily a problem, but it might be beneficial to the educational process to provide a financial advising process that provides a variety of approaches to financial responsibility and theological education. Those who never receive aid and work long hours in addition to studies may not gain as much as they could and, at the other end of the spectrum, those who borrow large amount to focus exclusively on studies may be mortgaging their future. Perhaps the deeper question is how these financial values and decision-making processes are related to broader issues of values and priorities and how they affect the learning process and a graduate's integrative process as they apply and contextualize their learnings.

Pamela Couture is a helpful dialogue partner for thinking about the significant diversity of family situations and lifestyles present in a theological education community. She focuses on shifting the focus of care from individuals to their primary relationships. Couture develops a woman's perspective on pastoral care with a particular focus on the individualistic nature of American society. She works with the web metaphor in some very helpful ways.

As caregivers, we can become seers who, from a particular vantage point in society, can interpret the relationship between the suffering of individuals and the structures and policies of our social ecological web. . . . A social ecological foundation for pastoral care would include attention to the potential sources and practices of care, and their implicit and explicit theologies, in culture, public policy, the formation of community institutions, families and individuals, as these dimensions of care intersect with one another. . . . [It] would also help the primary caregiver offer a critique of larger systems as they create undue suffering.²⁵

What is particularly powerful about Couture's image is that it identifies the formation of community institutions and families and the critique of larger systems as important aspects of what a social ecological framework for this living web of pastoral care would offer. Inspired initially by daily administrative contact with students and perspective students, I am convinced that this type of social ecological web can provide a basic foundation, perhaps a type of "safety net," in the context of a diverse theological school.

Diversity in Professional Goals and Motivation

A fifth dimension of diversity which bears mention here is the differences in professional goals and motivation for theological education. While only a few questions on this issue were included in my survey, this is a foundational area because it points to the skills, experience and expectations that students bring to theological education. My study indicates that there is considerable diversity in the area of professional goals and previous work/study background. These questions point toward the issue of students' motivation for pursuing theological education, initially, and then throughout their studies. This is a much more subjective and impressionistic concern but may be a powerful

²⁵ Pamela Couture, "Weaving the Web: Pastoral Care in an Individualistic Society," in Through the Eyes of Women, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 102-03.

ingredient in the mix of what a student brings to, and expects from, theological education. There are a number of ways to interpret the responses I received on questions related to future professional goals. These questions were designed as “mark all that apply” responses. Some respondents marked only one or two choices, others marked six or more. One interpretation is that those who chose only a few options are clearer about their goal and, hence, may be more focused on what they need from their theological education. Another interpretation is that given the breadth of degree programs represented and the variety of religious traditions with different levels of inclusiveness or access to ordained ministry and employability, it is more realistic to be open to a fairly wide variety of possibilities in one’s professional goals. Much more research--perhaps interview-based--should be done to assess the true nature of this difference and its impact on students and the theological education process.

One example of the overlap of professional goals with issues of race, gender, and access to ordained parish ministry is the enrollment of Protestant Hispanic-American women. A surprising positive correlation of sex and ethnicity in study is that Hispanic-American women are enrolling in graduate theological education, in this sample, in greater numbers than their male counterparts. Because the actual number of respondents is small, any conclusions are speculative, but this may indicate that these women, all of whom are UMC, have received encouragement in the Southern California cultural context to consider leadership. It could also indicate that Hispanic-American men are enrolling in other seminaries--more theologically conservative or outside the region. In Hispanic-American faith communities, it appears that there continues to be a significant bias toward male clergy leadership. Therefore, the women who challenge this cultural

norm by seeking support for their sense of call and then enroll in a liberal mainline theological school are perhaps more likely to see themselves as more liberal than the mainstream of their communities. It is also possible that these women are more open to serving in ministry in a cultural context than one primarily affiliated with their Hispanic-American heritage, particularly if they have experienced sexism within that community. It would be very interesting to do a national study of Hispanic Americans attending Protestant theological schools and assess the role of gender, geography, and religious affiliation on their choice of school and professional goals.

Concluding Observations

An expanded understanding of diversity places the classic categories of demographic difference in a broader context and, perhaps, relativizes their importance. Aspects of diversity can be seen in relationship to each other so that the overlapping structures of both richness and systemic oppression are more visible. For example, if a white, middle-class, middle-aged woman who commutes to campus part-time (because her family of four needs her on-going income to pay its bills) experiences some frustration with Student Services we can begin to evaluate the roll of class and economics as well as age and race in greater depth as interrelated dynamics.

In summary, boundaries are a key concern, given questions of tolerance in a milieu dominated by middle-class white mainstream Protestantism and conflict avoidance. Moreover, respondents' comfort level with questions about pluralism,

diversity, and multiculturalism present another level of complexity for which appropriate boundaries and safety are vital for theological education. It is important to establishing a consensual communal process and standard for setting boundaries that provides enough safety for healthy self-care. At the same time, this process should recognize the need for challenges to established ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms for the sake of working for greater justice and mercy and for healthier human communities. A fairly small number of respondents to this study indicated a sense of frustration, anger, or disappointment with their experience of “political correctness.” The particular comments indicate this experience included classroom interactions where a feminist critique of culture and religion were considered normative, and they experienced intolerance for questioning the feminist perspective. More generally, it seems that some students experienced a lack of openness to perspectives other than the one which was dominant in the class and a tone of sharp criticism rather than, or at least before, listening and hearing a differing perspective.

A second summary point is that an expanded and nuanced understanding of diversity is not functional if it does not include a “limiting” process. By this I mean that a pastoral theological care and counseling perspective not only provides a more adequate understanding of the student experience of diversity, but also raises questions of human, institutional, and communal healthy priorities and limits. A pastoral response is not functional, or truly pastoral, if it suggests to the already overburdened students, faculty, staff, and administrators that everyone just needs to expand their cultural literacy, embody these multicultural learnings, and work harder to move from the reality of a multicultural context to a functionally intercultural institution. A qualitative shift or

series of shifts must be envisioned and fleshed out within the institutional culture to rethink the meaning, value, and approach to diversity appropriate to the Claremont School of Theology's ongoing mission and identity. This study provides data to encourage on-going transformation. The respondents indicated a generally high level of satisfaction and lack of "crisis." The Claremont School of Theology can be justifiably proud of the level of satisfaction achieved in a significantly diverse sample student population. Therefore, the general pastoral approach to this situation can justifiably be focused on growth, improvement, and empowerment rather than on addressing "dis-ease" or specific problem solving. Put a different way, a feminist/womanist liberation perspective would encourage on-going review of the institutional processes for power analysis that identifies the "deficits" or structures of oppression and, at the same time, focuses on untapped sources for empowerment, growth, and positive/inclusive change.

Bonnie Miller-McLemore argues that the whole field of pastoral theology has shifted and developed over this century from its earlier dependence on psychology and sociology toward a new place. Now, "to be taken seriously by people of color and by white women, it will have to include . . . social analysis of oppression, alienation, exploitation, diversity, and justice in its clinical assessment of individual pathology."²⁶ Miller-McLemore emphasizes how the "shift in pastoral theology from care narrowly defined as counseling to care understood as part of a wide cultural, social, and religious

²⁶ Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The Living Human Web: Pastoral Theology at the Turn of the Century," in *Through the Eyes of Women*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 15.

context. . . [is] challenging systematic structures and ideologies of patriarchy, individualism, self-sufficiency, rationalism, materialism, and so forth.”²⁷

A third summary point comes from the language of systems theory. In systems theory, “first-order change” is differentiated from “second-order” change. “First-order change refers to the system’s tendency to return to a state that balances out deviations and keeps the system at a constant level. Second-order change is a more radical response, the outcome being a definitive overall change in the rules governing the system, as well as in the interrelationships among the elements constituting the system.”²⁸ Perhaps CST, and much of mainline liberal theological education, has managed a first-order change, defined briefly as adjustment to the problem or changed situation--in this case the changed and changing nature of the student body in theological education. However, second-order change will involve a more intentional and proactive approach that seeks not only to adjust and survive but also thrive, grow, and actively prioritize what “ought” to be the response to changed and changing realities.

As both a student and an administrator, I was attracted to and later promoted CST as a diverse community where persons are respected across differences. The Claremont School of Theology mission statement explicitly claims a view of diversity that say diversity provides richness and strength to enhance the school’s ability to fulfill its

²⁷ Ibid. 16.

²⁸ Herta A. Guttman, “Systems Theory, Cybernetics, and Epistemology,” in Gurman and Kniskern, eds. Handbook of Family Therapy (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1991), 2:49.

mission.²⁹ It is not simply the practical experience of encountering diversity in the Claremont student body, and a personal belief that theological education should be done in a climate of care, that underlies this study. Because CST has included these concerns in its mission and identity statements and stated their positive value, diversity is an aspect of reality it needs to enhance, support and encourage.

As I search for adequate conclusions regarding the implications of this study, I have sought a broader, liberationist perspective from which to view this research and the issues facing theological education. Rebecca Chopp, writing as a feminist practical theologian, uses the metaphor of "therapy" to talk about theology, and, it applies to theological education. If "theology is a social therapy" (see quote below) then theological education is the learning and application of this process that includes evaluation, assessment, and revisioning of life and the worlds we live in.

The metaphor for understanding the function of theology is therapy. . . . Theology as a critical theory not only resists and deconstructs, names sin, but also imagines alternative futures, names real possibilities of grace as ways of living differently. . . . Theology is a form of social therapy. Therapy, understood in the best sense, operates in two movements: first, the analytical and descriptive, while at the same time trust is being built in and through relationships. . . . A second movement is also necessary in which the person. . . begins reshaping her life. . . composes a new narrative. . . . Therapy is a practice of productive or generative logic about one's relation to the world. . . the saving work of therapy, the engagement of new habits, virtues, new understandings of context, of systems, or structures, and of self.³⁰

This research expands and refocuses an understanding of diversity in theological education to include and prioritize issues of differences in religious experience, approach to pluralism, a concern for a variety of self-care or beyond-the-classroom challenges, family and lifestyle difference, and diversity in professional objectives. These aspects of

²⁹ Claremont School of Theology, *Catalog, 1996-1998*, 4-5.

³⁰ Rebecca Chopp, "Christian Moral Imagination: A Feminist Practical Theology and the Future of Theological Education," *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 1, no. 1 (1997): 102, 105-06.

difference are more significant, although not independent from, demographic diversity. It is these non-demographic aspects of diversity that are identified by respondents as areas for both self and institutional improvement. The expanded understanding of diversity points toward institutional needs in areas of staffing, infrastructure, and the need for a variety of types of support systems to undergird the quality curriculum and more formal requirements of a quality and diversity-sensitive theological school. Diversity, multicultural concerns, and pluralism are generally seen as of positive value, but there are those who feel excluded. For those who currently cite exclusion, the focus on diversity tends to be experienced as a kind of “political correctness.” Perhaps it is reasonable to assume that there will always be some persons who feel excluded by any particular institutional or cultural priority because it does not match their self-understanding or values. However, these voices provide an important reminder of the reality of contending values and the need to be open to critique. “A feminist pastoral perspective begin[s] with the assumption that neither human health nor human illness can be investigated accurately in isolation. . . .Critical questions [are] both intrapersonal and interpersonal.”³¹

Theological education communities are in the midst of addressing increasing diversification of their student bodies, faculties, staff, and surrounding communities. They may find it helpful to begin with a pastoral care and counseling analysis or a theological and conceptual rethinking of diversity; either way, change is underway. The complexity present in the very nature of diversity must certainly be acknowledged, however, the gifts and riches this evolving reality brings have yet to be fully delineated.

³¹ Valerie M. DeMarinis, Critical Caring: A Feminist Model for Pastoral Psychology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 17-8.

While the daily administrative complexities are daunting, I have found that the very same diversities that make policy decisions and implementation increasingly difficult are a source of hope and inspiration for the future of the church and a more just and merciful society.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study

Theological education. . . in the context of the United States, understands itself to be 'in crisis,' desperately needing new models to address the changing trends in the church and in culture. . . . Contemporary theory and theology explores culture as heterogeneous and in process. . . the site of conflict, change, and development. . . . How do we think constructively toward transformation for the future of theological education? . . . Can we form practical theology and theological education as grace filled spaces of and for new life?¹

The challenges facing the churches and their seminaries and theological schools are enormous. However, the opportunities and resources in terms of creative and imaginative approaches arising from the richness of our pluralistic and multicultural environment are also immense. As a person who holds (at the same time) the roles of theological student, theological school administrator, and pastoral caregiver, I believe we have only just begun to tap the positive potential and energy of the diversity flooding theological education. However, I also believe schools need to be strategic and have intentional, flexible plans to cultivate, support, and sustain the diversity they attract.

The impact of diversity on the students at a specific theological school is even more complicated and ambiguous than I could have guessed before conducting this research. Ultimately, many aspects of diversity's impact remain to be discovered through future studies in this area. Quantitative data, in this case, does not provide a recipe for how to maximize the value of diversity in the experience of first-year theological students. The quantitative results actually encourage a more experimental, deductive approach to expanding our understanding of the meaning and value of demographic

¹ Chopp, "Christian Moral Imagination," 97-99.

diversity to students involved in theological education. The most important conceptual finding of this research is the challenge to rethink, re-imagine, our understanding of the meaning, power, and potential of diversity. Those of us in the work and ministry of theological education face the prospect of opening ourselves to the ambiguity and creative, transformative potential of new understandings of diversity, plurality, and multiplicity. We are called to make an on-going intentional effort to listen, learn, and seek a better understanding of the complexity of both individual students who come for graduate theological education and the communities and traditions that form them and, ultimately, call them (and us) to accountability. Though this research is specific and limited, I have discovered an amazing sense of the beauty and richness of the diversity within church, academy, and society. I have also become more aware of the inadequacy of our understanding, resources, and ability to respond to the bewildering array of perspectives. The challenge of continuing to provide a sustaining environment for mutual enrichment in theological education is getting greater at an alarming rate. I have no trouble understanding the sense of feeling overwhelmed that leads to fear, retreat, and calls by some within the churches to return to an earlier “orthodoxy,” an ahistorical truth which provides shelter from the chaos of the global society. While I understand these reactions, I believe current research within communities of faith, educational institutions, and larger sociological studies indicates we live in an inescapably multicultural world, and we must make the most of it, for our own sake and for the sake of the world.

It is my hope that further research and institutional energy can be invested to help mainline Protestant theological schools benefit more from the vast resources of “secular” higher education studies, cultural analysis, cross-cultural communication research, urban

studies, and other relevant studies. Furthermore, these learnings need to be woven together with the biblical, ethical and theological mandate to “love God with all your heart, mind, and soul; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Clearly, faculty, administration, and staff provide the on-going structures for this constantly changing and evolving environment in which multiple communities engage each other on multiple levels. It is a profound gift, as well as challenge, to create and re-create institutional structures and processes so that they are proactively supportive of, not simply reactive to, cries for help in crises. I believe we have only scratched the surface in our understanding of how to be well-integrated, living, growing institutions in the midst of an overwhelming wealth of perspectives, cultures, and communities which intersect in specific ways in theological education.

I recognized a number of particular temptations that we must be consciously avoided to reach a more complete, liberative, and empowering understanding of demographic and other kinds of diversity in theological education. First, there is a powerful pull conceptually to “transcend” the limits and specificity of human differences, look only at the “big picture,” and seek the ultimate transformative paradigm or ideal for theological education. I am convinced that such discourse is useful and illuminating, but only if it can be brought into dialogue with the “messy” realities of experiences of diversity and difference as they occur in classrooms, offices, and religious communities where theological education is being put into daily practice. Philosophical approaches provide important and vital insights but cannot serve as the sole, or even primary, perspective for addressing the impact of diversity with mainline Protestant theological education. Ideals and paradigms must be firmly grounded in dialogue with and the

practice of theological education on campuses, in classrooms, churches, offices, and religious communities where it must finally be done, on a daily basis, by and with people of faith.

A second powerful temptation is to focus on “oneness,” on the mission or general works we can all agree we share. Again, this sense of the universal element in human experience is an important piece of the process of effective theological education and community action in the world; however, it is not an adequate overall approach. This powerful tendency seems natural to persons of faith and commitment as they seek to work together to meet concrete human needs and seek a “common good.” Clearly, the ability to work together in the midst of difference and diversity is extremely important. However, too much of the beauty, particularity, complexity, and unique contributions of particular perspectives may be suppressed or lost to achieve these unified efforts. Therefore, the challenge is to continue to weave common threads of action and service through the complex tapestry of difference, contrasts, and potentially conflictual goals to create a living dynamic, respectful and sustaining of both difference and unity, both discontinuity and connection.

I encountered a third powerful temptation, as I have reviewed my findings and various approaches to diverse and pluralistic communities. On the opposite end of the spectrum from the pull to “oneness” is the demand for absolute “particularity.” Both the postmodern critiques of any claim to complete objectivity and the counseling concern to respect each person’s unique experience and perceptions can tend toward a complete subjectivism. There is a powerful pull to see one’s individuality or cultural group in such specificity that facilitating real dialogue across differences becomes nearly impossible

due to the sheer magnitude of the complexity. Moreover, the loss of a sense of common threads or shared reality can make communication more difficult.

I have assumed cultural diversity is a resource to be cultivated and utilized to help ministry, teaching, and mission to be grounded and relevant in a diverse church and global society. It also seems natural to me to understand diversity as a source of stress and anxiety. Along with the Mud Flower Collective, I want to argue that even the stress and conflict caused by diversity are good, valuable, and signs of health in theological education. Some important questions are the following: what do we do with this energy? How does demographic diversity contribute to educating for transformation? What institutional structures, staff, and procedures can help facilitate the utilization of this dynamic resource? Perhaps further studies of theological education applying recent work on conflict management (as compared to conflict resolution) would be helpful.

Most of the literature in the debate about theological education is focused on understanding its “essence” or nature and purpose. Because theological schools are educational institutions, the implications of whatever position is arrived at focus on things like curriculum and pedagogy. These are worthy and vital tasks. Research is continuing in this area; one example is the dissertation completed by Susan Davies at Columbia University in 1994. Her subject is Bangor Theological Seminary and a Master of Divinity introductory class she teaches. The study is entitled “Critical Insights: The Educational Construction of Theological Socialization.”² She provides an exciting combination of critical feminist/womanist pedagogy with adult learning theory. No

² Susan Elizabeth Davies, “Critical Insight: The Educational Construction of Theological Socialization” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1994).

doubt, there are other such projects focused on what should be taught and how it should be taught. Moreover, as the full impact of globalization is felt at theological schools across the United States, more studies grounded in particular schools, applying the insights of cultural analysis and liberative theologies, will be needed.

However, the focus of this study has not been the classroom, or the larger nature and purpose of Protestant theological education. Here my focus has been on the pastoral “environment,” if you will, of a particular theological school, which employed me, educated me, and inspired my pastoral care and concern. I have argued that a study of one year’s entering class, at the close of that academic year, viewed through the lenses of pastoral care and counseling and giving attention to socio-cultural location of students yields new insights into diversity. In summary, based on this limited sample, I have found that a student’s age, racial/ethnic context, and sex, for example, are not determinative of her or his subjective experience in the first year. This conclusion needs further study with a much larger sample and a regional or national pool. However, it is significant that the common-sense notion that race, sex, or age can “make or break” a person’s educational experience is *not* supported by this study. Persons from a diverse mix of backgrounds and perspectives reported a variety of experiences but the differences do *not* lend themselves to easy categorization.

My study identifies five non-demographic dimensions of diversity that appear significant in the experience of student respondents. Firstly, diversity in theological identity and experience within a primary faith tradition is a significant factor. Today’s theological students may or may not have any familiarity with biblical texts and the traditions and practices of mainline Protestant churches. Furthermore, theological

schools attract a significant minority of non-Protestant students. A second dimension of an expanded view of diversity is the variety of perspectives on the *value* of pluralism and multiculturalism as significant factors in society and of positive value to theological education. It is important to be aware that there is a significant undercurrent of frustration with what can be perceived as political correctness or a liberal religious perspective that excludes evangelical religious concerns and experience. A third dimension of diversity evident from this study is the range of ‘beyond the classroom’ concerns raised by students. Many student participants identified aspects of self-care--some were more spiritual in focus, others more practical, and still other more communal focused. Underlying this area of concern is an ethnic/cultural difference in the understanding of self and community and their interrelationship. The fourth type of expansion in the understanding of diversity is in the variety of households and family or lifestyle situations. This type of diversity may be a direct outgrowth of changes in the age ranges and ethnic cultural diversity, however more study is needed to evaluate these connections and the responsibilities and resources they provide for theological students. The fifth and final dimension identified from this study is the diversity in the professional goals and motivation for theological education. Perhaps the definition of ministry has never been broader, or, perhaps gender, class, race, and religious differences have inspired a multiplicity of motivations for theological study. More research on this question and a better understanding of the historical roots of changing views of ministry, as well as theological education as a tool for other professional goals, might be fruitful.

The research method I have utilized here points toward areas for future study in terms of how the theory and technology of inferential statistics, utilizing SPSS, can be

integrated into our understanding of mainline Protestant theological education. I have noted that the more complex aspects of this methodology have not been significantly utilized in the larger quantitative studies of theological schools. However, it is also important to note that postmodernist, liberation, and feminist theorists and practitioners provide serious critiques of quantitative analysis. Concerns about understanding the limits of quantitative analysis are significant and should be included in the design and interpretation of further studies of graduate theological schools. That caveat given, multiple regression analysis and other inferential statistical methods offer a powerful tool that can contribute to a more complete understanding of complex situations if used carefully and, as with all interpretative tools, with a “hermeneutic of suspicion.”

It can also be argued from this study that where a person sees her/himself on both the theological and political spectrum may contribute significantly to their self-reported academic success, emotional satisfaction, or spiritual fulfillment. It is also likely, given a small sample, that international students’ are more likely to feel dissatisfied and unsuccessful. These results are not particularly surprising. A particularly fruitful focus for future research in graduate theological education might be a broad-based study of international students aimed at understanding what these students would describe as the most important factors either supporting or undermining their educational process in the United States.

Though my findings are based on the assumption that theological schools should continue to broaden their understanding and support of all diversity, I am also reminded of the question: what might be the limits to sustainable, or desirable, diversity?

Specifically, in a theological school context, are there theologically, ethically, pastorally

defensible limits to the diversity a particular theological school environment can or should sustain? This is an important question for further conversation, study, and research. Perhaps studies based in cross-cultural communities, understandings of non-oppressive religious pluralism, and studies of bio-diversity can provide focal questions for further research about Protestant theological schools in North America.

Another area of “overnight” growth in education that will continue to transform theological education is the utilization of information and communications technologies. The role of distance learning and its impact on the relational aspects and diversity present in theological education is just beginning to be seriously discussed and researched. The Association of Theological Schools has provided some guidelines for accreditation of distance learning courses and programs. Given the importance of physical presence, embodiment, holistic relationships, and many other commitments voiced by many if not most understandings of ministry, the role of information and communication technologies are a grave concern for pedagogy. However, these new tools also potentially provide access to theological education for persons from many parts of this country and the globe that have been isolated until now by geographic and economic limits. Perhaps even more importantly, can this communication be structured as fully interactive, where the experience, passion, needs, and gifts of the world could become more visible and compelling to the more privileged North American schools? If so, then perhaps more functional forms of multicultural solidarity can be developed and implemented within and across a variety of faith traditions and communities around the globe.

Appendix A

End of Year Questionnaire

**END OF YEAR
QUESTIONNAIRE**

**FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS '96-'97
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

Please answer the following questions. Choose the response that best matches your situation or experience.

**Return to Office of Admission, Kelli Bronson, 1325 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711

1. What degree are you seeking?

- ☐ MDIV ☐ MAR ☐ MATS ☐ MARE
☐ DMIN ☐ PHD ☐ Non Degree Student

2. What is your denominational and/or religious affiliation? (Please specify.)

3. Sex: ☐ Female ☐ Male

4. What was your primary vocation prior to seminary? (Mark most appropriate answer)

- ☐ Parent/Homemaker ☐ Full-time Student ☐ Professional Ministry
☐ Social Services ☐ Educational Career ☐ Business Career
☐ Other career: _____ (please specify)

5. What is your current primary professional objective? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ Ordained Parish Ministry ☐ Pastoral Counselor ☐ Seminary Staff
☐ Ministry in Higher Education ☐ Seminary Faculty ☐ Christian Educator
☐ Denominational Staff ☐ Lay Parish Ministry ☐ Youth Ministry
☐ College Religious Studies Faculty ☐ Social Advocacy
☐ Chaplain (Military, Hospital, Prison) ☐ Other (please specify)

6. How old are you? (Mark one)

- ☐ 25 or under ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45
☐ 46-55 ☐ 56-65 ☐ 66 or over

7. On average, how many units have you taken each semester? (Mark one)

- ☐ 3-6 units ☐ 7-11 units ☐ 12 or more units

8. On average, how many hours have you worked at a paying job each week? (Mark one)

- ☐ None ☐ 1-10 hrs. ☐ 11-20 hrs. ☐ 21 + hrs.

9. How would you describe your current paying job:

- ☐ Related to Previous Professional Career ☐ Related to Future Professional Career
☐ Campus Work Study ☐ Other: _____ (Please specify)

10. On a continuum from liberal to conservative, politically rank yourself and CST:

Self	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
CST	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative

11. On a continuum from liberal to conservative, theologically rank yourself and CST:

Self	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative
CST	Very Liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative

12. How do you describe yourself? (mark all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic American/Latino/Chicano |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anglo/Euro-American | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ (please specify). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International Student _____ (Please specify country of citizenship). | |

13. Your relational circumstance: (mark the one which is the best description)

- ☐ Single never married ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

14. If currently unmarried, are you involved in a committed relationship?

15. Indicate whether there are dependent or children or dependent adults in your family.

(mark the groups that apply):

- ☐ None ☐ children age 0-5 ☐ children age 6-12 ☐ children 13 or above
- ☐ dependent adult/s

16. Total family size (number of persons living together or financially dependent)

17. If you commute, how long is your one-way trip from home to Claremont?

- ☐ less than a ½ hour ☐ ½ hour to 1 hour ☐ more than 1 hour
- ☐ I don't have to commute.

18. How important the following concerns are to you as you complete your First Year? (check all concerns you consider "important")

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ Academic demands | _____ Balancing family & school |
| _____ Financial concerns | _____ Physical health |
| _____ Family concerns | _____ Mental health |
| _____ Personal faith development | _____ Ordination process |
| _____ Balancing work & school | _____ Future academic position |

19. What have been the most rewarding aspects of your first year of theological education? (choose top three options)

- ☐ Intellectual challenge ☐ Spiritual growth ☐ Increased self-awareness
- ☐ Freedom of inquiry ☐ New relationships ☐ Focus on academic goals
- ☐ Enlivened faith ☐ Investigation of sense of call
- ☐ Survival of multiple demands
- ☐ Focus on theological studies ☐ Deepened knowledge of Christian tradition

20. My family and friends are very supportive of my decision to study at Claremont?

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

21. Who have been your most significant emotional support persons this year?: (mark all that apply)

- ☐ Family of origin: father, mother, siblings ☐ Clergy women
- ☐ Extended family: grandparents, cousins, etc. ☐ Clergy men
- ☐ Pastor ☐ Spouse/Significant Other
- ☐ Godparents ☐ Personal counselor
- ☐ Friends ☐ CST students
- ☐ Spiritual director ☐ CST Staff
- ☐ Other: _____ (please specify type of relationship)

22. In each of the following categories how did your actual experience this First Year match your expectations? (circle the answer which best describes your experience)

Academic Load:

Much Heavier Heavier As Expected Lighter Much Lighter

Student Services (Admissions, Financial aid, Registrar, Business Office, Library):

Unresponsive Somewhat Unresponsive As Expected More Responsive Much More Responsive

Campus Life (Chapel, Student Groups etc.):

Very Closed Closed As Expected Open Very Open

Overall Time Demands:

Much Heavier Heavier As Expected Lighter Much Lighter

23. How academically successful do you think your first year has been?

Very Unsuccessful Unsuccessful Successful Very Successful

24. How spiritually meaningful do you think your first year has been?

Very Meaningless Meaningless Meaningful Very Meaningful

25. How emotionally satisfying do you think your first year has been?

Very Unsatisfying Unsatisfying Satisfying Very Satisfying

26. Overall, how satisfying has your First Year has been, in your own opinion?

Very Unsatisfying Unsatisfying Satisfying Very Satisfying

27. Overall, how has your first year experience at CST effected your self-esteem?

Very Detrimental Detrimental No change Improved Much Improved

28. What emotions have been most prominent in your experience this year? (circle three)

happiness	sadness	anger	frustration
fear	anxiety	numbness	euphoria
depression	excitement	confusion	joy
grief	surprise	dread	fulfillment

29. How well is CST doing in addressing each of the following concerns of its pluralistic community: (mark "+" for good and "-" for poorly, skip those you "don't know")

_____ Aging concerns	_____ Ethnicity concerns
_____ Child care concern	_____ Disability concerns
_____ Gender concerns	_____ Ecological concerns
_____ Economic concerns	_____ Multicultural concerns
_____ Racial concerns	_____ Sexual orientation concerns
Other concerns: _____ (please specify)	

30. If you knew before starting your First Year what you know now, how would you have prepared yourself better? I would have: (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Saved more money	<input type="checkbox"/> Taken more writing courses
<input type="checkbox"/> Worked with a Career Counselor	<input type="checkbox"/> Gotten more experience in ministry
<input type="checkbox"/> Taken more undergraduate Religious Studies	<input type="checkbox"/> Worked with a Spiritual Director/Pastoral Counselor
Other: _____ (please specify)	

31. If you had a friend planning to begin theological education what academic subject areas would you suggest they study to be well prepared before starting? (choose up to three)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> General Liberal Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Biblical Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing & Research courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Language courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ (please specify) | | |

32. If you could change one aspect of yourself to improve your experience of your First Year of graduate theological education what would it be:

33. If you could change one aspect of Claremont School of Theology to improve your experience of your First Year of graduate theological education what would it be:

Any comments or reactions to this survey you would like to share: (please attach a separate sheet if needed).

*All survey responses are anonymous, unless you provide your name above.

**Any person who wishes to discuss personal concerns raised by this survey may contact the Associate Dean, Dr. Cornish Rogers. The Clinebell Institute in Claremont, (909) 624-7130 or The Samaritan Center of Upland, (909) 985-0513, can provide a referral to a pastoral counselor.

END OF YEAR
QUESTIONNAIRE

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS '96-'97
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

If you would be willing to be interviewed to provide more in depth information
provide your name here:

Address: _____

Best phone number to call: _____

Best times to call. (day and hour): _____

****Return to Office of Admission, Kelli Bronson, 1325 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA
91711**

Appendix B

Complete Frequencies of the Survey

The following copy of the survey instrument provides a complete record of the frequency with which each item on the survey was selected. The number of respondents who selected that item is provided in the parenthesis next to the choice.

**END OF YEAR
QUESTIONNAIRE**

**FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS '96-'97
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

Please answer the following questions. Choose the response that best matches your situation or experience.

****Return to Office of Admission, Kelli Bronson, 1325 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711**

1. What degree are you seeking?

(27) MDIV (5) MAR (10) MATS (2) MARE (4) DMIN (5) PHD (2) Non
Degree Student

**2. What is your denominational and/or religious affiliation? (Please specify.)
(see Table 12 in Chapter 4)**

3. Sex: (33) Female (22) Male

4. What was your primary vocation prior to seminary? (Mark most appropriate answer)

(6) Parent/Homemaker (8) Full-time Student (6) Professional Ministry
(2) Social Services (7) Educational Career (14) Business Career
☐ Other career: (4) Religious Education (please specify)

5. What is your current primary professional objective? (Mark all that apply)

(25) Ordained Parish Ministry (4) Pastoral Counselor (2) Seminary Staff
(7) Ministry in Higher Education (9) Seminary Faculty (11) Christian Educator
(3) Denominational Staff (4) Lay Parish Ministry (7) Youth Ministry
(9) College Religious Studies Faculty (6) Social Advocacy
(9) Chaplain (Military, Hospital, Prison) (3) Other _____ (please specify)

6. How old are you? (Mark one)

(3) 25 or under (11) 26-35 (19) 36-45
(17) 46-55 (5) 56-65 (0) 66 or over

7. On average, how many units have you taken each semester? (Mark one)

(16) 3-6 units (15) 7-11 units (24) 12 or more units

8. On average, how many hours have you worked at a paying job each week? (Mark one)

(15) None (8) 1-10 hours (14) 11-20 hours (18) 21 or more hours

9. How would you describe your current paying job:

(15) Related to Previous Professional Career (13) Related to Future Professional Career
(4) Campus Work Study ☐ Other: (6) purely financial

10. On a continuum from liberal to conservative, politically rank yourself and CST:

Self : Very Liberal (10) Liberal (17) Moderate (21) Conservative (6) Very Conservative (0)

CST: Very Liberal (16) Liberal (21) Moderate (11) Conservative (0) Very Conservative (0)

11. On a continuum from liberal to conservative, theologically rank yourself and CST:

Self : Very Liberal (13) Liberal (16) Moderate (13) Conservative (10) Very Conservative (1)

CST: Very Liberal (15) Liberal (27) Moderate (5) Conservative (1) Very Conservative (0)

12. How do you describe yourself? (mark all that apply)

(5) African American/Black

(3) Hispanic American/Latino/Chicano

(33) Anglo/Euro-American

(0) Native American

(5) Asian American Other: (1) Celtic Am., (1) Native Am. & Anglo. (1) Black & Anglo

(5) International Student Korean (5) (please specify country of citizenship).

13. Your relational circumstance: (mark the one which is the best description)

(14) Single never married

(31) Married

(7) Divorced

(1) Widowed

(2) Separated

14. If currently unmarried, are you involved in a committed relationship? (8) "yes"

15. Indicate whether there are dependent or children or dependent adults in your family.

(mark the groups that apply):

(28) None

(4) children age 0-5

(10) children age 6-12

(13) children 13 or above

(1) dependent adult/s

16. Total family size (number of persons living together or financially dependent)

1= (14), 2=(9), 3=(12), 4=(13), 5= (3), 6=(2).

17. If you commute, how long is your one-way trip from home to Claremont? (mark one)

(7) less than a ½ hour

(16) ½ hour to 1 hour

(21) more than 1 hour

(10) I don't have to commute.

18. How important the following concerns are to you as you complete your First Year? (check all concerns you consider "important")

(44) Academic demands

(34) Balancing family & school

(36) Financial concerns

(18) Physical health

(26) Family concerns

(16) Mental health

(29) Personal faith development

(14) Ordination process

(27) Balancing work & school

(14) Future academic position

19. What have been the most rewarding aspects of your first year of theological education? (choose top three options)

- (35) Intellectual challenge (13) Spiritual growth (15) Increased self awareness
 (8) Freedom of inquiry (16) New relationships (14) Focus on academic goals
 (6) Enlivened faith (8) Investigation of sense of call
 (17) Survival of multiple demands
 (21) Focus on theological studies (22) Deepened knowledge of Christian tradition

20. My family and friends are very supportive of my decision to study at Claremont?

Strongly disagree (0) disagree (0) neutral (4) agree (25) strongly agree (23)

21. Who have been your most significant emotional support persons this year?: (mark all that apply)

- (19) Family of origin: father, mother, siblings (5) Clergy women
 ((0) Extended family: grandparents, cousins, etc. (5) Clergy men
 (10) Pastor (31) Spouse/Significant Other
 (0) Godparents (6) Personal counselor
 (35) Friends (21) CST students
 (10) Spiritual director (13) CST Staff
☐ Other: Children (3) (please specify type of relationship)

22. In each of the following categories how did your actual experience this First Year match your expectations? (circle the answer which best describes your experience)

Academic Load:

Much Heavier (5) Heavier (16) As Expected (30) Lighter (1) Much Lighter

Student Services (Admissions, Financial aid, Registrar, Business Office, Library):

Unresponsive (2) Somewhat Unresponsive (6) As Expected (24) More Responsive (13) Much More Responsive (8)

Campus Life (Chapel, Student Groups etc.):

Very Closed Closed (11) As Expected (32) Open (12) Very Open

Overall Time Demands:

Much Heavier (6) Heavier (24) As Expected (23) Lighter Much Lighter

- 23. How academically successful do you think your first year has been?**
 Very Unsuccessful (0) Unsuccessful (3) Successful (39) Very Successful (11)
- 24. How spiritually meaningful do you think your first year has been?**
 Very Meaningless (0) Meaningless (6) Meaningful (36) Very Meaningful (10)
- 26. How emotionally satisfying do you think your first year has been?**
 Very Unsatisfying (0) Unsatisfying (11) Satisfying (31) Very Satisfying (11)
- 27. Overall, how satisfying has your First Year has been, in your own opinion?**
 Very Unsatisfying (1) Unsatisfying (8) Satisfying (29) Very Satisfying (15)
- 28. Overall, how has your first year experience at CST effected your self-esteem?**
 Very Detrimental (0) Detrimental (1) No change (24) Improved (24) Much Improved (5)
- 29. What emotions have been most prominent in your experience this year? (circle three)**
- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| happiness (16) | sadness (1) | anger (4) | frustration (15) |
| fear(5) | anxiety (24) | numbness (1) | euphoria |
| depression (5) | excitement (20) | confusion (10) | joy (16) |
| grief (1) | surprise (10) | dread (2) | fulfillment (26) |
- 30. How well is CST doing in addressing each of the following concerns of its pluralistic community:
 (mark "+" for good and "-" for poorly, skip those you "don't know")**
- | | | |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------|
| + (7) - (5) Aging concerns | + (28) - (2) | Ethnicity concerns |
| + (2) - (7) Child care concern | + (14) - (12) | Disability concerns |
| + (36) - (2) Gender concerns | + (25) - (4) | Ecological concerns |
| + (11) - (15) Economic concerns | + (29) - (5) | Multicultural concerns |
| + (30) - (2) Racial concerns | + (30) - (5) | Sexual orientation concerns |
| Other concerns: _____ (please specify) | | |
- 31. If you knew before starting your First Year what you know now, how would you have prepared yourself better? I would have: (check all that apply)**
- | | |
|---|---|
| (16) Saved more money | (20) Taken more writing courses |
| (6) Worked with a Career Counselor | (4) Gotten more experience in ministry |
| (16) Taken more undergraduate Religious Studies | (4) Worked with a Spiritual Director/Pastoral Counselor |
| Other: _____ (please specify) | |

- 32. If you had a friend planning to begin theological education what academic subject areas would you suggest they study to be well prepared before starting? (choose up to three)**

(20) Religious Studies

(8) General Liberal Arts

(14) Biblical Studies

(15) History

(38) Writing & Research courses

(15) Language courses

(32) Philosophy

(3) Social Sciences

(13) English courses

- 33. If you could change one aspect of yourself to improve your experience of your First Year of graduate theological education what would it be: (see attached).**

- 34. If you could change one aspect of Claremont School of Theology to improve your experience of your First Year of graduate theological education what would it be: (see attached.)**

Appendix C

Complete Written Responses and Additional Comments

Questions

Q.32 “If you could change one aspect of yourself to improve your experience of your First Year of graduate theological education what would it be?”

Q.33 “If you could change one aspect of Claremont School of Theology to improve your experience of you First Year of graduate theological education what would it be?”

Responses

Each survey received is numbered and listed below. Some persons responded to only one of the open-ended questions. A few persons wrote in “other” information earlier on the survey form that is summarized here as well. A few persons attached a separate sheet of paper and wrote a much longer response.

#01 “Other support”: Emmaus Reunion Group

Q.33 “have it put more emphasis on community, spirituality & holiness!”

#02 Q.32 “better time management”

Q.33 “nothing”

#03 Theology, liberal to conservative continuum: “I don’t use these words for theology.”

Q.29 “too much in some cases to these concerns” (pluralistic community concerns)

Q.32 “stop procrastinating”

Q.33 “make the courses at more. . .” (incomplete sentence on form)

Comments: “One class that I took which was jointly sponsored by the grad. School of religion & CST, went way overboard in “political correctness” in my opinion. I far

prefer the classes where people do not jump to question others' motives and label them bad people just because they may have different ideas or perspectives. The class was very disheartening because one to the major things I get from my classes is a sense of community and there was far too much negativity and suspicion in this class for that to happen. By contrast the ETSC classes had a very collegial and respectful atmosphere where ideas and feelings could be discussed without personal attaches, even when people disagreed."

- #04 Survival of multiple demands – “not yet done deal – this is finals time!”
- #05 Q.32 “more dedicated”
Q.33 “nothing”
- #06 “I withdrew from the program”
Committed relationship: “steady but not necessarily headed for marriage”
Commute: 2 and 1/2 hours
Most rewarding aspects: “intellectual stimulation”
academic success: “I never completed either class – I have withdrawn from the program”
spiritual meaning” meaningful -- “In that I learned some life lessons.”
emotional satisfaction: very unsatisfying -- “if I had stayed, due to stress, but the courses were interesting.”
Overall satisfaction: very unsatisfying – “I dropped out because I couldn’t juggle all the demands of school and work and commute. The classes were interesting, but it was way too much work.”
Overall, impact on self-esteem: improved – “I felt good that I got in and tried it.”
Q32 “more confidence”
Q33 “less expensive”
- #07 Q32 “faster reader and note taker, over discipline, stamina”
Q33 “I love the school. I only wish I had more time to devote to my work there.”
- #08 Commute: 3 hours one-way
Q32 “worry less”
Q33 “better advising”
- #09 Q32 “variety of individual theology”
Q33 “a deep studying of the Bible based on Theology”
- #10 Q31 “suggest working w/ spiritual director to form a strong contemplative prayer foundation prior to starting classes.”
Q32 “trust my abilities more – not worry about academics.”
- #11 Other support: “children”
- #12 No responses to open questions

- #13 Q32 "my age"
Q33 "sense of esprit de corps"
- #14 Campus life: "As a commuter I'm not involved in campus life."
Q32 "clarity in writing"
Q33 "no commuter schedule and free housing!"
- #15 Other support: "congregation of my home church," "leader and students in Movement of the Spirit"
Q32 "more physical stamina"
Q33 "more focus on worship life"
- #16 Q32 "I would have stayed on campus at least in commuter dorms."
- #17 Better prepared: "moved off campus"
Q32 "be a better advocate for myself"
Q33 "more interaction between Profs. and students"
- #18 Q32 "move closer"
Q33 "more consistent class load"
- #19 Other concerns of pluralistic community: "it's been wonderful to be out and affirmed! Thank you!
Better prepared by: "beefing up my personal library to defray book costs."
Q32 "my organizational skills"
Q33 "more maps in the classrooms!"
- #20 Q32 "I wish I were younger and had more time to focus on seminary."
Q33 "Library available Sunday afternoon."
- #21 Q32 "be more aware of the toll commuting takes and be more gentle w/ myself."
Q33 "difficulty w/ one professor concerning accommodation of learning disability."
- #22 Q32 "less perfectionism"
- #23 Q32 "be more aggressive when requesting information"
Q33 "have more available staff to help the needs of students not on campus."
- #24 Q32 "A better attitude toward my writing skills. My self esteem in that area was destroyed by a high school teacher."
Q33 "Example syllabus of several first year classes put into orientation packets."
- #25 Q33 "more community activities"
- #26 Q32 "to be less of a perfectionist"

Q33 “more opportunities to develop a sense of community among those living on campus”

#27 Other support: “my children”

#28 Q32 “My reading speed – I would triple it.”

Q33 “Smoking allowed in the quad area of the classroom building – change to not allowed there.”

#29 Q32 “prepared the capacity of English”

Q33 “focused on local church”

#30 Q32 “to stop procrastinating”

Q33 “smaller classes”

#31 Q32 “Kept up with the reading better”

Q33 “have a good clergy advisor as well as the advisor I have here.”

Comments: “I was at a church, my fiancée was at a different church, and my children go to a third church. I would like us all to worship together. Moving was difficult while in school. It’s very hard to study with my three boys around – ages 5,8, & 10.”

#32 Q33 “Communication – I feel like I received more correspondence prior to enrolling. I take classes in AZ so it is especially difficult. People have been very receptive when I have specific questions, but I don’t always know what questions to ask!

#33 Other concerns of pluralistic community: “finally a handicapped restroom.”

Q32 “Handle money better.”

Q33 “nothing”

#34 Responsiveness of Student Services: “I am a student taking classes in the evening. There is no consideration taken by the administration to offer services in the hours when students are on campus in the evenings. Such as book store hours. 1st week of 2 of class. Someone in administration to a least able to give out or accept forms.

I enrolled in CST with no illusions. My spouse graduates shortly and I was aware what it would take. BUT, I do feel that everything is basically set up for the con campus student. There is little feeling of belonging for someone who has to fight rush hour traffic. That’s a choice that I make. If I didn’t work I couldn’t afford to attend. But, CST does not give me any those ‘warm fuzzys’ of community. It is more of an means to the end than an exciting journey. Some days I’d just like to enjoy the journey.”

Q32 “to be more organized”

Q33 “move into the 21st century”

#35 No responses to open questions

- #36 Q32 “started CST sooner”
Q33 “learned more about the school”
- #37 No responses to open questions
- #38 Better prepared: “speed reading”
Q33 “higher regard for Bible.”
- #39 Other concerns of a pluralistic community: campus safety (poor lighting at night)
Better prepared: moved on-campus or closer to campus – “can’t afford it.”
Q32 “lose weight”
Q33 “private overnight commuter rooms”
- #40 Campus life: “I’m a commuter student - N/A”
Better prepared: “speed reading”
Q32 “have more money and fewer bills”
Q33 “CST to have more interest in its MA students”
- #41 Q33 “Profs need to space out papers and exams so all are not due at the same time – very frustrating.
CST needs to get more in tune with Perkins as far as course requirements are concerned.
- #42 Better prepared: “even more philosophy and science”
Q32 “more realistic in both expectation of ‘openness,’ as well as linking with genuine Christian tradition at CST.”
Q33 “That Christian tradition would be found in a place of appropriate honor. As it is it is ridiculed, despised, and demeaned though ever so subtly. Its place is ‘secular’ theology. It seems inconsistent w/ CST’s implied mission to serve the Christian Community, foremost, from whom it also receives its funding. To me this is even an issue of ethics in the latter.”
- #43 Better prepared: “would have taken prerequisite courses”
- #44 No additional responses
- #45 Q32 “study full time”
Q33 “I would like to see caring spirit among the students and faculty.”
- #46 No responses to open questions
- #47 Other concerns of pluralistic community: “There should be more sensitivity to those who are less committed to homosexuality and radical lesbianist feminism.”
Q32 “Receive financial aid”
Q33 “Diminish the recurrent phallophobic bias.”

- #48 Q32 "Be more involved in community life."
Q33 "Be more open to opposing views."

- #49 Q32 "better preparation for class"
Q33 (attached separate sheet):

"My wish is that there will be more activities where CST people can get better acquainted with each other. My impression of CST community is too individualistic to build a sense of community of love and friendship. I know that there is a regular chapel service where people can meet each other. But most of the people are supposed to be passive throughout the worship service. It is my opinion that seminary life has to be more than vocational school life such as attending the classes, writing papers, getting credits, and then graduating. I know that most people are busy juggling family, job, and school works. In the meantime, we lose a rare chance of experiencing friendship across culture, race, ethnicity, and all kinds of differences. Over the year, I notice that "Birds of a feather flock together." In other words, people with same race and cultural background cling together while there seems to be not enough chance to venture to mingle with people with a different culture. There doesn't seem to be interaction between students outside the classroom. I don't think that most CST people are Xenophobic. I don't think CST encourages to maintain racism. But more live interaction among students doesn't seem to be encouraged. Is this a form of status quo? To create a environment where CST can have a sense of community, I would like to suggest:

1)[H]iring a full time staff (or utilizing a personnel) in charge of community life (activities). 2) to encourage athletic activities. Theological education has to be not just cerebral, but also holistic. Human being is a psychosomatic being. Sound Body, Sound Mind. An hour's playing together can get people more acquainted with each other than spending a year of discussion. I hope that there will be a volleyball court on campus where people can have fun playing under the sunny Southern California sun. I am wondering whether it would be a good idea for suggesting students' mini-marathon, or half-marathon for the President's award once per semester respectively on special occasions. That may be discriminating against the physically handicapped and aged persons. But the sense of community building and zest and excitement of the CST people may be enhanced.

Having lived in the CST community for only one year, I admit that my perspective is pretty limited and possibly distorted. Besides, due to the cultural differences, my suggestions may not be appropriate to CST."

- #50 No responses to open questions.
- #51 Q33 "Variety of the class offering, ei. more classes needed in Biblical Studies and Theological Studies.
- #52 Q32 "more time to study/self discipline"
Q33 "financial aid for the new Ph.D. program"

- #53 Q32 “buy more books, sooner”
 Q33 “additional NT faculty”
- #54 No responses to open questions.
- #55 Prominent emotions: “fatigue”
 Q32 “better Biblical foundation”
 Q33 “Offer more evening classes”

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